

news

significant shorts

City leaders call for action to stop London sinking

London's business and political leaders united yesterday to urge the Government to act over the rise in London's ground water levels which could cause widespread damage to communications systems, property and the underground. The city lies on a water basin and ground water is rising by as much as three metres a year. The damage could begin within five to ten years and cost billions of pounds.

A coalition including Sir Roger Cork, the Lord Mayor of London, and the chairman of the London Underground, Peter Ford, has written to the John Prescott asking him to take overall responsibility for implementing a "water policy". London Underground already has to deal with regular flooding in parts of its network and has to pump 14 million litres of water from the system every day.

From 1850 for about 100 years, industries abstracted water from their own use, keeping the water table manageably low. But in the Sixties, heavy users either relocated out of London or closed down. Water levels have risen by 35m in 30 years. Kate Watson-Smyth ■ Flash floods left a number of villages isolated and several roads closed in central Scotland last night. In Lanarkshire the village of Shotts was reported to be under a foot of water.

Early release for IRA prisoners

Dublin yesterday moved to reinforce republican confidence in the resumed peace process in advance of next month's multi-party talks by releasing two IRA prisoners.

The two were not amongst the most important prisoners and the Irish government decision, though less than a month after the latest IRA cessation, appears to be a minimal first step reflecting general caution following the abrupt ending of the first ceasefire in February last year. Gerard Burke, of Dublin, was serving four years for offences linked to a robbery. Thomas Flynn of Cork was jailed for six months for assault. Burke was due to be released next June and Flynn in October this year. Alan Murdoch

Ronnie Biggs digs in his heels

Britain and Brazil opened the way yesterday for Great Train Robbery fugitive Ronnie Biggs (left) to be extradited when the two countries ratified a long-awaited extradition treaty. But there is no certainty that the 68-year-old will ever set foot on British soil. After originally saying that he would not try to fight extradition, Biggs vowed at the weekend that he would rather die than be brought back to jail in Britain. Years of legal wrangling in the Brazilian courts could be in prospect. Brazil has a statute of

limitation on crimes committed more than 20 years ago. Biggs has been on the run for 32 years after escaping from Wandsworth jail in 1965 while serving a 30-year sentence. Patricia Wynn Davies

Field denies U-turn on war pensions

Social Security minister Frank Field yesterday denied allegations from the Royal British Legion that the Government had broken pre-election pledges on war pensions. Veterans' leaders are furious about the Government's refusal to initiate a dedicated review on an anomaly that allows councils to deprive war pensioners of up to 75 per cent of their pensions by taking them into account when calculating means-testing housing benefit and council tax benefits. Mr Field said the onus for action was on the local authorities.

Industrial action at Barclays Bank

The union representing more than two-thirds of Barclays Bank staff today announces industrial action short of a strike to start next Thursday. The union, the UNIFL, is objecting to a newly imposed pay and grading scheme.

Montague Lewis & Pickwick Records

In the article "The BBC Lollipops" treasure trove of great classics found in radio archives" (18 April) we wrongly stated that when the BBC entered a joint venture with Montague Lewis in 1990 to exploit its classical archives he was head of Pickwick Records. In fact, his 26-year involvement in that company had ended in 1988.

In 1994 Pickwick was granted a licence to market 100 discs of recordings from the archives and, contrary to the suggestion in the article, at that time it was already a wholly owned subsidiary of Carlton Communications plc. The BBC gave its approval to the packaging of these discs before their release.

We are sorry for any contrary impression given.

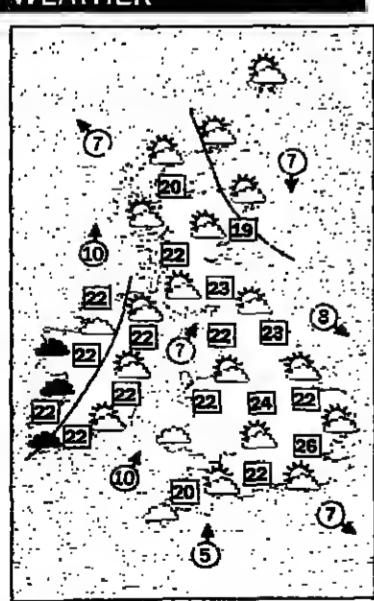
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WEATHER



The British Isles

General Situation and Outlook:

Eastern Scotland will start cloudy with showers in the far north-east. It should soon turn drier and brighter with sunny spells and isolated showers. Northern Ireland and western Scotland will be bright this morning with good sunny periods, but it will slowly cloud over this afternoon with a little showery rain in the western fringes by evening. Meanwhile, England and Wales will be fair and warm with sunny periods, although there may be some coastal mist and low cloud around in the south-west.

England and Wales will be very warm tomorrow with plenty of sunshine, although cooling sea-breezes will affect the coasts.

Southern and eastern Scotland should have a good deal of dry weather and some hazy sun-

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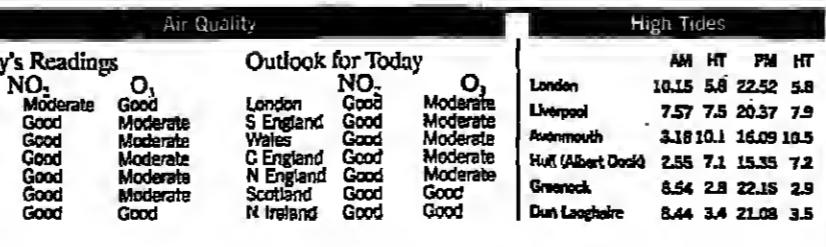
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people



Dudley Moore with his wife Nicole on their wedding day

Dudley Moore finds fourth time unlucky in love

Dudley Moore's on-again, off-again marriage is on again, it emerged yesterday. The British-born star of the hit film *Arthur* has filed for divorce from his wife Nicole in Los Angeles Superior Court on the grounds of irreconcilable differences after months of public spats and charges of abuse.

In court, Moore said the paternity of the couple's two-year-old son, Nicholas, was in question and that there was a pending legal action to determine if he was the father.

The court action followed a reconciliation last month between the 62-year-old comedian and his 33-year-old fourth wife after she went on television and accused him of beating and terrorising her, making her take drugs and forcing her to dance for him in her underwear for up to 20 hours a day.

Nicole Moore filed a \$10m damages suit in May against her husband and announced plans to divorce

him. He had already filed for divorce from her in 1995 but that suit was dropped.

In her damages suit against Moore, Nicole Rothchild Moore alleged that he repeatedly pushed, hit and choked her. She also alleged that he forced her to take amphetamines that led to her suffering a stroke.

Her lawyer, Kenneth Chyten, said at the time of the suit that Moore "had a strange power he was able to exert over her". Moore was arrested a month before the couple's April 1994 wedding for allegedly abusing her, but those charges were later dropped.

The diminutive actor, who has been based in Hollywood for the last 18 years, recently announced that he would return to Britain this year to star in *part*. It is his first pantomime role and a distinct change of pace and lifestyle. He will play Buttons in a production of *Cinderella* in Southampton and the production will move to the West End. ■ Kate Watson-Smyth

Dietrich gives name to new Berlin square

After years of debate over how to honour their famed daughter, Dietrichs soon will be able to send a letter with a Marlene Dietrich stamp to a brand new Marlene Dietrich square in Berlin.

The stamp, good for mail within Europe, features a portrait of the legendary film star and cabaret singer with lips pursed and a sultry look in her eyes. It goes on sale today. Two weeks later, on August 28, Berlin officials are to give final approval to a plan to create a Marlene Dietrich square in the massive Potsdamer Platz complex under construction in Berlin.

Officials in the adjacent neighborhood of Schoeneberg, where Dietrich was born, signed on to the Potsdamer Platz initiative

Wednesday, admitting their 5-year-old effort to agree on a suitable

place of property to rename after her had failed.

Some residents, still bitter over Dietrich's support for the Allies in World War II, opposed any recognition for her in Berlin. "She's not our people," Marlene Dietrich, 54, voicing a common opinion among respondents to a recent survey by the Berliner Morgenpost newspaper. More than two-thirds of callers opposed honoring the actress, who died in 1992.

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Berlin, Associated Press

Noel and Liam open up for BBC

Despite his penchant for anarctic rock songs Noel Gallagher declares there is nothing for the youth of the Nineties to believe in anymore. In a documentary to be shown next week, Noel and his brother Liam extol the virtues of having fun in Oasis: Right Here Right Now which will be shown next Wednesday on BBC1, the night before the band's new album goes on sale.

In their longest ever television interviews Noel is being a spokesman for his generation although he admits: "We'd definitely be leading the march if there was anywhere to march to."

Liam says: "I want to have fun ... I'm 24 years of age and I'm in the most important rock and roll band in the world ... how could I not have fun? I've got a load of money, what am I going to do; sit at home and clip my ***** toenails?"

Charles Arthur

briefing

EMPLOYMENT

Teachers steering men away from childcare

Men are steered away from jobs in childcare by their teachers, according to a study of why 99 per cent of workers in the sector are women.

The report by researchers at the London University's Institute of Education reveals that women see childcare work less as a professional occupation than as a continuation of their family and domestic experiences.

Women students felt the work was something they were "naturally good at", with the majority believing childcare training confirmed their maternal and domestic roles. That "presents some difficulties for men on the courses", researchers found.

The study for the Department for Education and Employment suggests men experience more barriers getting into childcare training and were recommended by their teachers at school to do other kinds of work.

It also finds that many students, both men and women, who train for childcare have been low academic achievers. Lucy Ward

WILDLIFE

Frisbee, killer whale style



Killer whales are using off-wide sting rays to play frisbee before eating them, a scientist's study has revealed.

Like cats, killer whales are renowned for playing with their food. They appear to have invented the frisbee game to avoid being stung by the rays' barbed tails. The strange behaviour was observed by Ingrid Visser, a research student at Auckland University, who spent two years studying killer whales off New Zealand.

She watched 19 whales, mostly male, pursue and eat 55 stingrays, some of which measured two metres across. On one occasion two whales ate 18 stingrays in a six-hour binge.

Normally one killer whale would dive down to find a ray on the sea bed and then signal the others. Ms Visser had observed whales in water as deep as 120ft, often doing headstands.

The study was reported in *New Scientist* and said: "Sometimes a whale flips the ray out of the water before tossing it around like a Frisbee with at least one other whale. Visser says this may be an attempt to reposition the ray so the whale can eat it without being stung."

It was also thought adult whales may use the game to show youngsters how to tackle dangerous prey.

TRAVEL

Airport passengers at record high

Major airports in the United Kingdom handled a record number of passengers last month, despite the British Airways' cabin crew strike, it was announced yesterday.

A total of 10.2m passengers passed through the seven airports run by the airport operator BAA in July 1997. This was an increase of 6 per cent on July 1996 and the highest monthly figure ever, BAA said.

The figure could have been even higher as BAA reckoned the three-day BA strike lost around 200,000 passengers.

The European charter market had the biggest growth last month - increasing 12.5 per cent and helping to boost Gatwick airport passenger numbers by 12.4 per cent.

COMPUTERS

Data spreads a bit of trouble

Computer spreadsheets can be hazardous to your financial health, according to an American scientist who has found that the programs - widely used for all sorts of fiscal forecasting and planning - demand more accuracy than humans can provide. The result can cost companies hundreds or even millions of pounds.

Professor Raymond Panko of the University of Hawaii, Honolulu, discovered that people on average make a mistake typing data into one in every hundred "cells" - a location on a grid of a spreadsheet, which is a piece of software that can build up complex mathematical relationships between any cell. Spreadsheets are routinely used, for example, to analyse variations in financial performance or predict the effect of interest rate changes.

But spreadsheets can be so complex, and rely so heavily on data from a particular cell, that a single error can be disastrous.

Professor Panko found over the course of a decade that 30 per cent of all spreadsheets he has examined contain flaws - some serious. If a quantity is entered incorrectly, or the formula linking one cell to another is written wrongly, the result can be far from correct.

"Human beings do not err often," he says in today's *New Scientist*. "But in large spreadsheets with many hundreds of cells, the normal human error rate is fatal."

Charles Arthur

SCIENCE

Jupiter whips up 380mph winds

The next time gales wreak havoc with our lives, it may be helpful to remember that the winds on Jupiter make our storms seem like mild breezes by comparison.

Data that has emerged from the *Galileo* probe, which parachuted into Jupiter's thick atmosphere in December 1995, shows that winds picking up with depth and reaching much greater velocities than had been estimated.

Scientists led by David Atkinson, from the University of Idaho in Moscow, USA, published their findings yesterday in the science journal *Nature*. The cause of the high winds is a mystery. "Whether these winds are driven by internal heat or absorbed sunlight remains uncertain," wrote the scientists.

HEALTH

Molecule clue to breast cancer

Scientists have identified a molecule present in most breast cancers which appears to control the growth of cancer cells and could point the way to new treatments. Studies show levels of the molecule, called Brk, are higher in two-thirds of breast cancers but absent in normal breast tissue.

The finding, published in *Oncogene*, was made by a team at the Institute of Cancer Research. Dr Mark Crompton, leader of the team, said: "With further research, it may be possible to develop drugs that target Brk directly, thus stunting the tumour's growth, without impacting surrounding healthy cells."

Jeremy Laurance

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Strong pound sends shellfish trade plunging to the depths

Louise Jury

The British shellfish industry has been plunged into crisis by the strong pound, raising fears that half its fishermen and wholesalers will go bust by the end of the year.

Britain traditionally exports most of its catch and is making huge efforts to expand its home market in a bid to try to mitigate the problems with tough export markets.

But despite growing interest in molluscs and crustaceans by the British consumer, fishermen fear that it will not be enough to offset the slump in trade abroad.

Jim Partridge, of the Monteum fish company in Shoreham, Sussex, said: "If something doesn't happen soon, I would expect 50 per cent of fishermen and 50 per cent of merchants to go out of business by the end of the year."

Dr Clive Askew, of the Shellfish Association, which represents 400 retailers and fishermen from Scotland to Cornwall, said: "The news we get from around the coast is that it's very serious."

Mr Partridge said the pound

had risen so quickly that the margins they built in to absorb such increases were wiped out. Sometimes they were receiving less money than the fish were sold for.

The problem was compounded by the sluggish economies of France and Spain, the biggest markets for shellfish in the past, but whose populations could no longer afford to eat out as often as they once did.

In previous summers, the French would take a lorry-load of crab every day. This year it is on a week. "Europe is completely and utterly dead," Mr Partridge said.

Jeremy Brown, of Just Shellfish in Port Isaac, Cornwall, said prices usually levelled out after Easter at around £9 a kilo for lobster but were now hovering around £6.50 or £7. "We haven't seen prices this low in years and our expenses are the same as ever if not greater," he said.

And despite some optimism in the business about a growth at home, he did not hold out huge hopes for a growth in the home market. "I tried to sell fish door-to-door and there was very little interest. The average

housewife is put off by a bone. We don't eat fish or shellfish in Britain," he said.

Yet Dr Askew, from the Shellfish Association, said there were some signs of an interest in seafood, just as British cuisine in general has grown more adventurous in recent years.

"Supermarkets are looking very much more seriously at shellfish — some of it is to do with improving their image as they did by supplying wines." But there would need to be a "huge boost" in Britain offset the drop in exports.

Last year, 116,000 tonnes of shellfish, with a value of nearly £138m, were landed in the UK, an increase of 10,000 tonnes over five years ago.

But the amount exported — 71,000 tonnes — has not changed over the same period.

British consumers are buying more to eat at home and when they eat out, although much of this is prawns not caught in British waters.

A spokeswoman for Waitrose, often regarded as the trend-setter in foods, said it had seen a significant increase in interest in shellfish in the last

five years. "It's a very large market as far as we're concerned. We have 103 branches out of 115 with fresh fish counters which include shellfish," she said. Stock includes fresh oysters, mussels, scallops and langoustines.

Safeway sells pre-cooked British crabs and British oysters

and Marks and Spencer offer prawns and some small quantities of lobster at its London West End stores.

But fresh fish counters are still a rarity in high street supermarkets, and the number of fishmongers in Britain has declined significantly in recent years.

Feeling the pinch: Shellfish has declined in popularity since Victorian times, when oyster stalls, below, were common. Today, a strong pound has ruined the export market, and the natives turn their noses up at delicacies like this brown crab, above

Photographs: Andrew Hasson (top), Hulton Getty



How the winkle lost out to the burger

Jack O'Sullivan

The strong pound may be destroying the shellfish industry, but its long term enemy is the British palate. The winkle pickers are gone, the jellied eel is a rarity, the whelk stall has all but disappeared. Burgers, chicken nuggets and chilled ready meals have ousted the ocean's own convenience foods from the everyday menu. We just don't seem to want shellfish anymore, which makes the exporters even more vulnerable to currency variations.

"Winkles and cockles used to be a regular feature of a Saturday and Sunday," says the famous Islington fishmonger, Steve Hatt junior. "People don't do it anymore." So yesterday in Fort William in the west of Scotland, the best of the shellfish

catch was not being bought locally. It was being collected straight from the boats by big Spanish lorries as they landed, to be consumed in Spain. "Most of what is landed here doesn't reach our shops," says Alan Brown, manager of the local Crannog Smoke House.

He also argues that the huge investment in equipment, including up to £100,000 for a reasonable boat, has driven up fishing costs. Then, says Steve Hatt, there is the expense of handling, purifying and transporting a food with a shelf life of perhaps five days, often too short for supermarkets. "The good old whelk costs more now to handle that it was worth when it was caught."

Indeed, though Elizabeth I introduced three fish days a week, this island nation has never taken full advantage of its marine resource. In 1863, WF Campbell, from Galloway, ob-

served that while his Scottish compatriots starved back home without properly harvesting the sea, the French poor consumed a huge range of creatures, in particular molluscs and shellfish.

Tom Jaine believes the British are unadventurous about food. "There is a tendency, more marked in the last century, to restrict the numbers of things considered edible. One presumes these restrictions are generally related to industrial development, distance from the land and from food production."

Emily Green, the food writer, is less charitable. "People are very suspicious unless it doesn't actually look like shellfish. So they will eat prawns which are

pink and packed in plastic and you won't hear them saying they are allergic to it."

"People say shellfish is complicated. But lobster is easy. You have to assault it a bit, but it is not complicated like owning a microwave or rehydrating space ice cream."

"The problem is that it's too real. It's alive. That can be scary. You have to do the killing. People are squeamish."

Diehards gather for the Haj of the church of Elvis

David Osborne
Memphis

Never mind that Geoff Cowley from Bradford lost his job as an international lorry driver just two months ago. He and his wife, Varna Marie, have had this trip booked for two years and nothing was going to stop them taking it. Mississippi, Memphis, Hawaii, Los Angeles and back to Yorkshire in just over three weeks.

This is not a holiday. It is a pilgrimage. It is the Haj of the Church of Elvis Presley — the King, the Cat, the Pelvis, the father of Rock 'n' Roll. Tupelo, Mississippi, is where he was born. Hawaii and Hollywood are where he made his films, but Mecca is here: Graceland, the Presley mansion in Memphis.

Each year they come, the diehards of the Elvis denomination, to this surprisingly unimposing stone home with its ridiculous pillared portico and its kitsch interior of velvet couches and mirrored ceilings, to observe the anniversary of their deity's passing.

This year is special — Saturday is the 20th anniversary of the day when the by-then bloated and drug-dependent performer collapsed in his bathroom and died aged 42.

The gospel according to his fans tells us that Elvis did not die, that he staged his demise to escape his fans or the Mafia or both. "Elvis Lives!" Geoff and Varna, who otherwise seem thoroughly normal folk, know that the body now lying in the Graceland "Meditation Garden", filled with ornaments and signs from fans, is a fake.

The Second Coming, in fact, may be at hand. Perhaps, we ponder over an ice cream, Elvis might descend from a helicopter over the mansion to



A photo of the infant crooner being auctioned by Bonhams

morrow evening when tens of thousands of his followers will be gathered around the house for a candle-light vigil. "That would be nice," Geoff observes casually, as if such an event would no more surprising than some old friend dropping by the pub unexpectedly.

Al Zapp from New Jersey confides that Elvis is already in Memphis. "He is one of the impersonators," he says. "He will have changed his face some, but he is here." Zapp himself is one of the myriad look-alikes flocking to Memphis this week. And he is surely one of the sorriest ones, with his chipped aviator sunglasses and sweat-stained rayon shirt. An Elvis riff wafts

from the nearby Elvis Presley Memphis theme restaurant and Zapp instantly begins an Elvis leg-shake — like a dog having its tummy scratched.

Just in case the helicopter never shows, Elvis Presley Enterprises, the company that runs Graceland, will ensure fans get the next best thing at Saturday night's "Elvis in Concert '97" at the Memphis Coliseum. With the magic of hologram technology, an apparition of Presley will rise up before the congregation and perform his most famous songs accompanied by some of his still-living former band members.

The real mystery of this re-

ligion is its power over so many. What is it that induces Geoff and Varna Marie and 900 other members of the British Elvis Presley Fan Club to spend their savings to come here?

Why are all these people, from around the world, crowding at the crazy-stone wall at the front of Elvis's stately home vainly for just one square-inch space of virgin rock to scrawl their message of worship? "Elvis, we can't cry, hard enough", and, "Twenty years — twenty million tears", and, "Most wanted you, Many needed you and All loved you, Michelle 1997".

Why are these women pressing five-deep at the stage of the downtown Daisy Theater on Tuesday night gasping for Darrell Dunhill, a 53-year-old from Florida, who works full-time as an Elvis impersonator? Occasionally, Darrell takes a nylon scarf and, just as Elvis did, mops the sweat from his chest and wraps it around the neck of one of the women. Delicious, she takes it as if it were communion itself.

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news

Student tells of attack on the Red Sea road



Max Hunter, a law student from Surrey, who died in the attack

Boyfriend shot dead after couple hitch lift to kibbutz

Eric Silver
In Jerusalem

A British student who saw her boyfriend shot dead and was injured herself by a man who gave them a lift as they travelled in Israel described the attack to *The Independent* last night.

Charlotte Gibb, 20, from a village near Peterborough, told how the attacker shot and killed Max Hunter, a 22-year-old law student from Banstead, Surrey, on the desert road north from the Red Sea resort of Eilat before dawn yesterday.

Ms Gibb, who was at Durham University with Mr Hunter, was out of danger in a Beersheba hospital, where she was recovering from surgery for fractures to an arm. She had shot gun injuries to her face and hands.

Her voice faltered, close to tears. Her speech was slurred, as if she were feeling the effect of the pain-killing drugs doctors administered after she came out of the operating theatre. She still referred to her boyfriend in the present tense, though she knew he was dead. "Max had arranged for us to go to a kibbutz near Tiberias," she said. "We were hitching a lift from Eilat. A man who looked about forty or fifty picked us up. I was in the back seat with our bags. Max, who speaks Hebrew, sat in the front talking to the driver. I fell asleep.

"The next thing I knew, Max was shaking my leg, saying, 'Are you awake?' We had stopped somewhere in the desert. The car lights were off, and it was pitch dark. The moon was hidden. The driver had got out and was looking for something. He asked us to put

our bags in the boot, which we did. "The driver lit a cigarette. We thought we'd have one too. Suddenly I saw yellow flashes. I thought this can't really be happening. He shot Max, then before I could try to get away he shot me.

"I lay behind the car, pretending to be dead. He shot Max again, then came back and shot me again. Then he drove off. I thought this is it. I'm going to die. I was losing blood. I was half unconscious, but managed to drag myself to the road. I shouted for my boyfriend, but I knew he was dead. After about half an hour, a van of Israeli soldiers rescued me."

The soldiers raised the alarm and a military helicopter evacuated Ms Gibb to Serota hospital, where she arrived about 4.15am. The killer's motive was as puzzling to Ms Gibb as it was to the police.

Although she could not follow the Hebrew, and the driver did not understand when she asked him a question in English, he and her boyfriend did not raise their voices and did not seem to be arguing. In retrospect, however, she felt that he intended all along to shoot them. "Why else," she asked, "did he make an excuse to get us out of the car?"

Hundreds of police were combing southern Israel last night, hunting for the killer. The police were treating the case as criminal, rather than political. According to an unconfirmed Israel Radio report, the assailant was thought to be an Israeli Arab (Ms Gibb could not tell whether he was a Jew or an Arab). Detectives were checking whether he had fled across the border to Egypt.



Charlotte Gibb, Mr Hunter's girlfriend, who was shot in the face and hands

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DAILY POEM

Nurse's tales retold

By Tabish Khair

Because the east wind bears the semen smell of rain,
A warm smell like that of shawls worn by young women
Over a long journey of sea, plain and mountains,
The peacock spreads the Japanese fan of its tail and dances
And dances until it catches sight of its scaled and ugly feet.

Because the koel can not raise its own chicks -
Nature's fickle mother who leaves her children on doorsteps
In the thick of nights, wrapped in controversy and storm -
Because the koel will remain eternally young, untied,
It fills the long and empty afternoons with sad and sweet songs.

Because the rare Surkhaab loves but once, marries for life,
The survivor circles the spot of its partner's death uttering cries,
Until, shot by kind hunters or emaciated by hunger and loss,
It falls to the ground, moulting feathers, searching for death
0 child, my nurse had said, may you never see a Surkhaab die.

This poem is from the latest issue of the *London Magazine* (£7.95), edited by Alan Ross. Celebrating 50 years of Indian independence, it embraces new fiction, verse, essays, memoirs, photographs and reviews. Subscriptions to the *London Magazine* cost £28.50 per year from 30 Thurloe Place, London SW7.



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McMaster inquiry promises guilty will be disciplined

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

A senior Labour Party figure yesterday fuelled speculation there could be disciplinary action against one of the MPs named in a suicide note by Gordon McMaster, the Paisley South MP and former Labour whip who killed himself last month.

Jim Smith, the co-ordinator of Paisley North constituency Labour Party, said he had been assured the inquiry by Nick Brown, the Government Chief Whip, would be thorough and wide-ranging.

Mr Smith also said there would be quick and decisive action against MPs who were found to have acted "inappropriately".

Tommy Graham, named along with Lord Dixon in the suicide note by Mr McMaster, has been criticised by Scottish Labour sources for a recent interview repeating allegations against Mr McMaster that he had a drink problem.

Mr Graham, MP for Renfrew

and Inverclyde, who is expected to be interviewed by Mr Brown, is seeking to clear his name from the allegations in the suicide note that he was part of the whispering campaign against Mr McMaster, but his interview was described as "not very clever".

The pressure on the Labour Party to take disciplinary action was increased when the Scottish National Party suspended one of its councillors for allegedly spreading smear stories about Mr McMaster.

Mr Smith said on BBC radio he had been assured there would be "no cover up" following a report yesterday in *The Independent* that friends of the dead MP feared the inquiry would be a whitewash unless it delved into allegations of links in Scotland with drugs gangs and organised crime.

He said: "I have been assured there will be no cover up. Every aspect of this will be investigated fully and if there is anybody in the Labour Party guilty of inappropriate behaviour that will be dealt with most severely.

"This inquiry must be absolute. There must be no doubt left in anyone's mind that the Labour Party has looked into every aspect of this dreadful affair. I have no doubt that the Chief Whip will do this," he added.

Mr Brown cancelled his holiday to go to Scotland, but faced growing demands for the inquiry to be widened following the disclosures in *The Independent*.

Mr Brown met the parents of the dead MP, William McMaster and his wife Allison, on Monday to discuss the suicide note. He also met Leslie Quinn, a senior official of the Scottish Labour party.

The content, location, and outcome of Mr Brown's meeting with the parents was not disclosed.

But a source confirmed the MP's suicide note - in which he is believed to have bitterly complained of a smear campaign against him - was discussed.

"That was the main purpose of the meeting," said the source.

Welsh devolution message finds apathetic audience

Tony Heath

Marion Jenkins ripped off a grinning Tony Blair mask and proclaimed "Yes, I'm going to vote 'yes' for devolution."

Ron Davies, the Secretary of State for Wales, looked suitably impressed, as well he might, considering the reception accorded to his team of campaigners urging people in the Rhondda to vote for an elected

Welsh Assembly on 18 September.

Ms Jenkins set up her joke and costume-hire shop, " Sew easy to make believe", in Hannah Street, Porth, last year. Politicians are of some news value to her. "I've got two Tony Blairs for hire at £5 a night," she explained. "William Hague?" "There's no call for him round here," she said.

By taking devolution to

Labour's heartland, Mr Davies is seeking to secure a big "yes" vote in five weeks' time.

Apathy seems more of a threat in Porth, one of a string of former mining towns that the "no" campaign funded by millionaire Sir Julian Hodge from his tax haven home in Jersey. But a posse of campaigners, including Peter Hain the Welsh Office junior minister, Julie Morgan, MP for Cardiff North, and Wayne David, MEP for South Wales Central, worked the shopping crowds expertly.

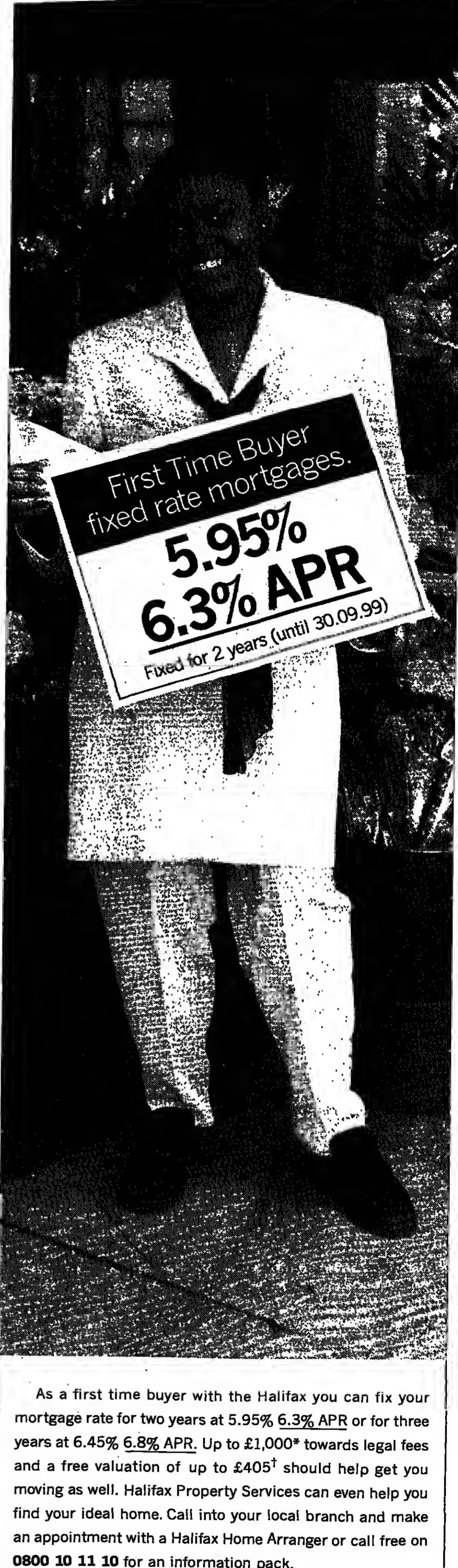
Devolution does matter to 84 year old Gertie Challenger. "We're Welsh and proud of it. It's time we had a say in our own affairs," she said.

Alan Rogers, MP for the Rhondda has reservations because proportional representation is being introduced to elect 20 of the 60 assembly members.

However his constituency Labour Party's general management committee reportedly voted down a proposal calling on members not to support the "yes" campaign by the huge margin of 68 to 7.

In 1979, Welsh voters decisively rejected devolution by 4-1. Yesterday, although the atmosphere was more pacific than revolutionary, a touch of the evangelical broke through. There was no need to preach to the converted, but there seemed to be enough "don't know" to swing the result either way on 18 September.

Sea road



Blair's babes nudge for places at the top table

Bright, ambitious, youthful, Labour's high-flyers are busy sorting out the future

Kathy Marks

The next generation of Labour high-flyers is already in place, occupying influential positions at the heart of government. These are the fledgling politicians who helped to engineer Labour's election victory and now occupy desks in key Whitehall offices.

They are the aides, thinkers and special advisers who play a central role in the formation of policy and have daily access to Tony Blair and his ministers. They are bright, ambitious and above all youthful. Die-hard Blairite modernisers without exception, they are a close-knit network of people who work, socialise and, in some cases, live together. They met through school, university or youth politics and introduced one another to their political patrons.

A cluster of these rising stars work in the No 10 Policy Unit, the powerhouse of New Labour ideas, including the policy director, David Miliband, 32, a former academic with a fearless intellect tipped as a future Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Treasury is another breeding-ground. One of the senior advisers to the Chancellor Gordon Brown is Ed Miliband, 30, brother of David. His chief strategist is Ed Balls, 29, a former *Financial Times* leader writer who is engaged to Yvonne Cooper, Labour MP for Pontefract and Castleford.

Some members of the inner circle are found in ministers' private offices - Liz Kendall, for instance, a 26-year-old who guides Harriet Harman around the intricacies of the social security system. Others, more on the periphery, work for think-tanks, lobbying firms and private political consultancies.

The links between them are many and complex. Ed Miliband is the long-standing boyfriend of Liz Lloyd, 26, a home affairs adviser in the Policy Unit. Ms Lloyd went to school in Guildford with James Purnell, 27, who also works in the unit, and with Tim Allan, 27, Alastair Campbell's deputy in the Downing Street press office.

Mr Allan and Mr Purnell share a house in Tony Blair's Islington heartland, together with Gail Nuttley. Mr Purnell's girlfriend, who used to work for BMP, Labour's advertising agency. On Sunday mornings they kick a football around Highbury Fields with others such as Peter Hyman, of the Policy Unit, and Ian Corfield, research director of the Fabian Society.

Another keen footballer is Benjamin Wegg-Prosser, a disconcertingly self-possessed 23-year-old who is Peter Mandelson's chief aide. Derek Draper, 29, used to do the same job. Mr Draper, whose book on the first 100 days of the Blair government will be published next month, is now with Prima Europe, a political consultancy.

Despite their loyalty to Blair, not all of them live in Islington.



The Miliband brothers occupy separate flats within a handsome house in Primrose Hill. Mr Draper lives two doors away from Ms Lloyd in Kennington. Most of these bright young things - metropolitan, cosmopolitan and media streetwise - have degrees from Oxbridge

or redbrick universities. Several had stints at the BBC. Mr Purnell was John Birt's policy adviser, and has also worked for Islington Council, a training ground for young Blairites.

Members of the group insist that is not a closed set. But certainly, it has its uses. Mr Purnell, who worked as an adviser to Mr Blair after university, recommended Mr Allan for his job when he left in 1992. When the latter quit for the BBC in 1994, Ms Lloyd took over.

They're suspicious of people who they say are not on the side of the party," one political journalist said. "That can make them seem rather reticent and cool." Mr Draper said:

"It's a very strong network, no doubt about it. But it's an open, meritocratic clique. The reason that we all get on, to be arrogant about it, is that we're all very clever."

Confidence they do not lack, nor talent, nor ambition. David Miliband and Mr Purnell, together with the lobbyists Ben Lucas and Neal Lawson, all want to be MPs. Ed Balls is surely destined for high office. But with power so centralised in the Government, they already wield enormous influence.

Outside work, members of the circle meet up at dinner parties and restaurants. Several are members of the Groucho Club, the media haunt, and the Soho

House Club. Mr Draper and Mr Allan are drinking partners who go out "on the pull" together.

While Mr Draper is a notorious party animal, some of the others are more retiring. Mr Corfield says he has never seen either of the Miliband brothers drunk. What unites them politically is their pragmatism, having watched the Labour Party tear itself apart in opposition. Despite their jobs, they claim not to have an exaggerated idea of their own importance. "We're there to assist elected politicians," one special adviser said.

"We're not players. Once you see yourself as a player, you're dead."

Donald Macintyre, interview with Peter Mandelson, page 14

Ethical face of new breed of lobbyists

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Three former advisers to Tony Blair have formed an agency operating out of small new offices in Soho to promote "ethical" lobbying.

Following the "cash for questions" scandal, they are developing an "ethical" approach to their business. They will not take on clients "whose behaviour or goals we find politically or morally indefensible".

Neal Lawson, 34, Ben Lucas, 35 and John Mendelsohn, 30, were advisers to Tony Blair during the general election campaign in Labour's Millbank media headquarters.

Mr Lucas, a former adviser to Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, said they would not take on business from tobacco companies, and would not have ac-

cepted a brief to oppose the ban on handguns.

All former political advisers to Labour spokesman in Opposition, they worked for Lowe Bell, the public affairs firm run by Sir Tim Bell, until after the election when they left to form their own company.

One of their clients is the RSPCA, and they are advising on the strategy for supporters of the Labour backbench Bill by Michael Foster to ban hunting.

They are part of the new breed of lobbyists being hired by all the political communications lobbying companies in the scramble to catch up with the Labour landslide on 1 May, which has made ex-Labour advisers hot property.

"We think we have struck a chord with a lot of people," Mr Lucas said. "We have only been going for six weeks but there has

been a growing sense that the way in which organisations relate to the government and to the political process needed to change.

"A certain type of lobbying has been dying out for quite a long time - the idea that all you have to do is take an MP or minister to lunch, introduce them to your client, convince them of the argument, and show them a constituency interest.

"The election of a Labour Government symbolised, far more directly, the way that government deals with outside organisations and it has to be far more above board.

"In our case, it is not who we know, but understanding the way that people work that matters."

All three are Labour Party members and committed Blairite modernists.

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Olde English images ousted by cool Britannia

Michael Streeter
and Kelly Pemble

Great Britain plc is to be given a new, trendier marketing image in an attempt to attract more visitors to the country.

The influence of cultural champions such as rock band Oasis and the current theme of Cool Britannia will help create the new national logo, edging out the old "roast beef and royalty" view of the country.

However the British Tourist Authority yesterday denied reports that it is dropping the Union flag from its brand image altogether.

The marque, which will feature on the BTA's literature and brochures, will be unveiled next month after extensive testing of the new design with 21 focus groups. The £50,000 project is seen as important to the development of an industry which is already worth £40bn a year to the economy.

Mr David Quaraby, chairman of the BTA, said: "Our research into visitors' perceptions about Britain has shown how much they appreciate the unique contrasts of the traditional and the innovative, our history and heritage but also our contemporary achievements in fashion, style and design.

"The brief for our designers was to capture these contrasts in one marque with which we can promote Britain abroad as a tourism destination."

The current logo features the BTA's initials alongside a Union flag. The London agency designing the new logo, Real Times Studio, yesterday said that it had not been specifically asked to keep the flag. "We were given a core booklet, which contained all the elements the BTA wanted looked at, and the Union Jack was not in it," said Annie Eaves, its development director.

Yesterday *The Independent* asked other creative agencies – at short notice – to come up with their own serious and humorous

ideas for a new badge of Britain. John Spencer, creative partner of Spencer Landor, favoured a design reflecting "cool authority", and said the flag ideally should be retained but used differently. "The image needs to be very professional, a hit like the perception of new Labour."

Other countries, even if they do not use the national flag, normally reflect their colours in their logos. The French have flashes of blue, white and red on their marque, in a "deliberate attempt" to keep the French flag as an identity, said Gillian Green, head of press for the French tourist office.

Spain's tourist logo depicts part of a painting by the Spanish artist Miro, but retains the country's colours of yellow and red. The Dutch tourist office does not display national colours – but uses a tulip instead.

Ireland's tourism office recently dropped plans to replace the shamrock with a new logo depicting two people with their arms outstretched in welcome. Critics condemned it as looking like sumo wrestlers preparing for battle. Australia uses sun, sea and kangaroos in their marque, but not the flag. Poland last year ditched its red, white and black logo, based on their national flag, and now use the word Polka with a graphic depicting the country's landscape.

What one insider described as the "freshening up" of Britain's overseas image was announced as another traditional British image came under threat – the footguards' bearskin. The Ministry of Defence announced yesterday it is carrying out another review of how to replace the need for real bears to make the headwear.

Lord Gilbert, the defence procurement minister, a noted animal lover whose wife Jean is a member of the fund-raising committee of the Worldwide Fund for Nature, is said to be concerned at the continuing use of the Canadian black bear.



Ins and outs: An image suggested by advertising agency Spencer Landor to promote Britain on the day a traditional image – the guardsman's bearskin – came under threat

However, though other animal-skin headwear made out of beaver and seal, has been abandoned in favour of synthetic materials, the Army has faced

difficulties in finding suitable alternatives to the longer-haired bearskins.

An MOD spokesman said: "In previous experiments, the hats

became rather bedraggled – like a bad hair day." The spokesman said they would rather use longer-lasting synthetic materials but added that the skins come from

bears already culled by the Canadian government, and not from an endangered species. "A lot of them are knocked down on roads in places like Ontario anyway," he added. The bearskin was first worn as an honour by the Foot Guards for their defeat of the French Imperial Guard, which wore bearskins, at Water-

loo. About 2,000 bearskins are worn, and 150 replacements are needed each year – coming from about 50 animals.

Leading article, page 13



Two suspended in abuse inquiry

Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

Two men working in local authority children's homes have been suspended after allegations of abuse dating back to the 1960s, police said yesterday.

Northumbria police are trying to locate hundreds of former residents of council homes between the 1960s and 1980s who may have been affected. Allegations about other workers have also emerged during inquiries by police but they are dead or retired and no longer working with children.

One of the men suspended is employed by Newcastle City Council and the other by Northumberland County Council, but they have also worked

for other authorities. The investigation began after a 1970s resident of a Newcastle council home made allegations of abuse; subsequent inquiries resulted in more complaints being made. The inquiries are believed to span several local authority areas.

Police will be working closely with child-protection agencies, social services and health as part of the inquiry team.

The allegations involve not only sexual but also serious physical abuse and the investigation is likely to be "lengthy but it is not known how wide-ranging it may prove to be", a police spokeswoman said.

Police have set up an incident room number 0161 868680 for anyone who has information.

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independence 50 years on

The legacy of midnight, marked

From Glasgow to Batley, Asians dance to a diverse cultural beat

by Margaret Rogerson

As the Scottish Association of Indian organisations prepares to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Indian independence in Edinburgh tomorrow, there may be some debate over the order in which the national anthems should be played. There is, after all, a choice of three: the Indian national anthem, the British anthem and, of course, "Flower of Scotland".

The celebrations in this country represent a lot more than simply marking the anniversary of Indian independence. Not only is it a confirmation of the importance of Indian culture and a tribute to the Indians, both Muslim and Hindu, who fought bravely for independence; it is also a special time in which Indian people in this country can celebrate their dual identity.

As Mohinder Chatrik, director of the Indian Workers Association of West Yorkshire points out: "As India celebrates its independence, congratulations should also go to the people of Indian origin in this country who have successfully forged a new life in Great Britain but have not forgotten the mother country."

The memory of independence is to some extent overshadowed by the horrors of Partition that followed. There is undoubtedly a bond between British and Indian cultures, and in many cases the British Asian community would find it difficult to define themselves as belonging to one or the other - especially the younger generation, who have often never even travelled to India.

But there is still a wish expressed by some British Asians for the British to take more responsibility for her colonial past. The massacres that occurred during Partition have been blamed on the lack of planning that went into dividing the country and the British government's desire to make a quick exit.

As Sewa Singh Kohli, secretary of the Association of Indian Organisations in Glasgow points out: "There was no preparation made for the gap of administration that was covered by the most unusual act in our history. Even when the British people decided to change over to the decimal system, lots of preparation went into it to help make the transition easier for people."

"But when Britain decided to leave India and millions of people

had to change countries, no extra people were drafted in to help sort it out. There were no plans, no thought and no discussion."

Indeed, there was a great deal of confusion leading up to Indian independence; people at the time seemed unsure about what Partition would actually mean. Hafez Hassan Daji from Batley in West Yorkshire recalls for *Awaz*, a local newspaper, his first impressions of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's first post-independence leader. He heard

"I liked India the way it was. But during those months around Partition, it was terrible. At night we couldn't sleep peacefully. We knew we might have to get up and go at a moment's notice. We were very scared... if we went to sleep we didn't know if we'd wake up."

Although the victory of independence was stained by the horrors that accompanied Partition, the celebrations in this country and India itself hark back to an Indian culture that was known for its diverse and pluralistic communities.

In Edinburgh, tomorrow morning's festivities will start off with a prayer meeting as practised by Gandhi himself. The meeting will represent all the main religious groups in India: Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian. It will also reflect the different cultures of today.

In the evening, as the Scottish Asian community in Edinburgh will be attending a public party in Princes Street, their London counterparts will get ready to start funking at the Soho Spice restaurant, where free beer will be on offer. The music played will be a mixture of Indian sounds from the Fifties to the present day. The performance will feature several tracks by Apache Indian, a rap artist who uses American influences alongside traditional Indian bhangra music.

Apache Indian's music represents both Eastern and Western cultures, which goes some way in explaining his popularity in Britain, where the British Asian identity is so richly embroidered.

In the words of Tara Mukherjee, head of the confederation of Indian Organisations: "In spite of everything, independence cemented the bond of friendship between these two countries and it is now stronger than ever. Today English has become an Indian language." Enriched, of course, by the soft cadence of many regional British vowel sounds.

**They want Britain
to accept more
responsibility for
the colonial past**

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"He spoke to us in Urdu and explained that the Muslim League wanted a separate state for Muslims, that would later be Pakistan. We didn't really know what he was talking about. We imagined it to be a place just for Muslims but in India. We certainly didn't realise that it would be another country."

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"I liked India the way it was. But during those months around Partition, it was terrible. At night we couldn't sleep peacefully. We knew we might have to get up and go at a moment's notice. We were very scared... if we went to sleep we didn't know if we'd wake up."

Although the victory of independence was stained by the horrors that accompanied Partition, the celebrations in this country and India itself hark back to an Indian culture that was known for its diverse and pluralistic communities.

In Edinburgh, tomorrow morning's festivities will start off with a prayer meeting as practised by Gandhi himself. The meeting will represent all the main religious groups in India: Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian. It will also reflect the different cultures of today.

In the evening, as the Scottish Asian community in Edinburgh will be attending a public party in Princes Street, their London counterparts will get ready to start funking at the Soho Spice restaurant, where free beer will be on offer. The music played will be a mixture of Indian sounds from the Fifties to the present day. The performance will feature several tracks by Apache Indian, a rap artist who uses American influences alongside traditional Indian bhangra music.

Apache Indian's music represents both Eastern and Western cultures, which goes some way in explaining his popularity in Britain, where the British Asian identity is so richly embroidered.

In the words of Tara Mukherjee, head of the confederation of Indian Organisations: "In spite of everything, independence cemented the bond of friendship between these two countries and it is now stronger than ever. Today English has become an Indian language." Enriched, of course, by the soft cadence of many regional British vowel sounds.

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to accept more
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Delhi is 150

independence 50 years on

in Britain, Pakistan and India

Border party may soothe the wounds of partition

Peter Popham
in Delhi

If the authorities permit it in India, the most pregnant image to come out of India's celebration of 50 years of freedom could be an unprecedented demonstration of Indo-Pakistani brotherhood on the border between the two perennially warring countries.

For the second year running, an organisation called Citizens for Democracy plans for its large numbers of fraternally-inclined Indians - the organisers predict about 2,500 people will turn up - to Wagan, the only land crossing in Pakistan. Organisers on the Pakistani side, it is planned, will be doing the same thing. (Last year, due to a mix-up, no Pakistanis showed up.)

Stages will be constructed a few dozen metres from the crossing point, and participants from both sides will enjoy a programme of classical music and dance. Around midnight, if the guards allow it, a small contingent will be permitted to cross over and embrace those on the other side. It will be a symbolic way to assuage the wounds of Partition.

Meanwhile the commemoration in the capital will follow a more traditional course. Delhi is filling up with the impedimenta of a major public event: barriers, floodlights, marquees, chairs. But it is symptomatic of the apparently desperate haste with which the celebration has been organised that as recently as last week the event organiser which won the tender to stage the main show was bickering publicly with the sponsors, Delhi City Government, over the payment schedule, and declaring that unless it received more money up front it would be unable to import the required high-tech equipment from the UK.



Artistic freedom: Dancing girls listen to an elderly freedom fighter at a ceremony in Delhi to honour the heroes of the independence struggle

Photograph: Andrew Buurman

Once the final wrinkles have been ironed out, however, Delhi should enjoy a grandstand seat at a celebration which will combine elements of the familiar, the spectacular and the emotional.

It will kick off at 9pm today with a "March of the Nation" along the main axis of Lutyens's New Delhi, from Nehru Stadium in the east to the park at the threshold of the Presidential Palace in the west, a distance of nearly two miles. Delhi City Government's Accounts Department allowing, the march will culminate in a spectacular show for an audience of some 7,000 (plus several hundred million more on television), with mu-

sic and dance, fireworks and a laser show.

Shortly before midnight, the action shifts in the Central Hall of Parliament for the grave, profoundly traditional portion of the celebration where, in the presence of parliamentarians, ambassadors and the chief guest of honour, Betty Boothroyd, the Speaker of the House of Commons, a recording of Nehru's famous "Freedom at Midnight" speech will be played.

"Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge," those rarefied Harrovian vowels will enunciate once more.

"...At the stroke of midnight, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom..."

It was originally intended that Ms Boothroyd would speak during the ceremony, but the idea was scrapped after an MP of the Hindu nationalist BJP denounced it as "preposterously idiotic" to have a Briton speaking on what was "a quintessentially Indian night".

The following morning's main event is also comfortably familiar: at the Red Fort, the grandest monument of pre-Lutyens Delhi, the Indian white, green and beige tricolour will be hoisted and the prime minister, Mr I K Gujral, will make a speech. Later tomorrow, at 3.30pm, yet another traditional anniversary item is scheduled. Richard Attenborough's pious *Gandhi* will be screened once more; this year preceded by an hour-long documentary on the making of the film.

Earlier in the day, however,

Gandhi's name will be invoked with a different resonance when 150 slum children gather at the Gandhi Memorial in central Delhi, holding placards berating the government for failing to make good the promises of the freedom fighters of 50 years ago; to eliminate illiteracy, poverty and child labour.

'Bandit Queen' threatens self-immolation

Phoolan Devi, the low caste "bandit queen" in the film of that name who last year became an MP, is threatening to disrupt India's Independence Day celebrations by setting herself on fire at the Parliament House.

Ms Devi is upset because a political enemy has decided to revive 55 cases pending against her, including charges of mass murder, which could bring to an end her new and comfortable life as a politician.

With her fine sense of theatre, Ms Devi has now seized the initiative with her threat to end it all. "Forgive me or kill me", she told a press conference in Delhi, "but do not humiliate me like this."

It is thought unlikely that Ms Devi will carry out her threat. But if she were to succeed in getting arrested in Delhi, it would keep her out of the grasp of the and give her a breathing space. Her bandit cunning has deserted her.

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international

Child beauty queen may have been murdered in sado-masochist ritual

Mary Dejevsky
Washington

A child murder case that has gripped America for eight months took a new turn yesterday with belated publication of the post-mortem report.

Published in the face of police objections, it established that JonBenét Ramsey, a six-year-old beauty queen from Boulder, Colorado, had been strangled, but also supplied evidence suggesting she may have been the victim of a sado-masochistic ritual.

Although it was rumoured that JonBenét had been strangled, the report supplied a wealth of detail pointing to bondage: it said she was found on her back, with a cord round her neck that was attached to a piece of wood.

There was another cord around her chest and she was wearing a long white sequinned robe. She wore a bracelet inscribed with her name and the date of Christmas Day, 1996 - the day before her body was found - and had a small red heart inscribed on the palm of her left hand in red ink. Her skull had been fractured and she may have been sexually assaulted.



John and Patsy Ramsey, who deny killing their daughter and claim an aggrieved ex-employee had a motive

The murder also opened up the world of child beauty pageants to unfaltering scrutiny. The post-mortem report was published as the result of a judge's order.

The police said details in the report could tip off the killer about lines of inquiry but journalists following the case noted that some details remained either unknown or undisclosed.

There was no estimated time of death - a crucial detail, in relation to the ransom note and in view of the fact that there was deep snow on the ground at the time and no footprints were

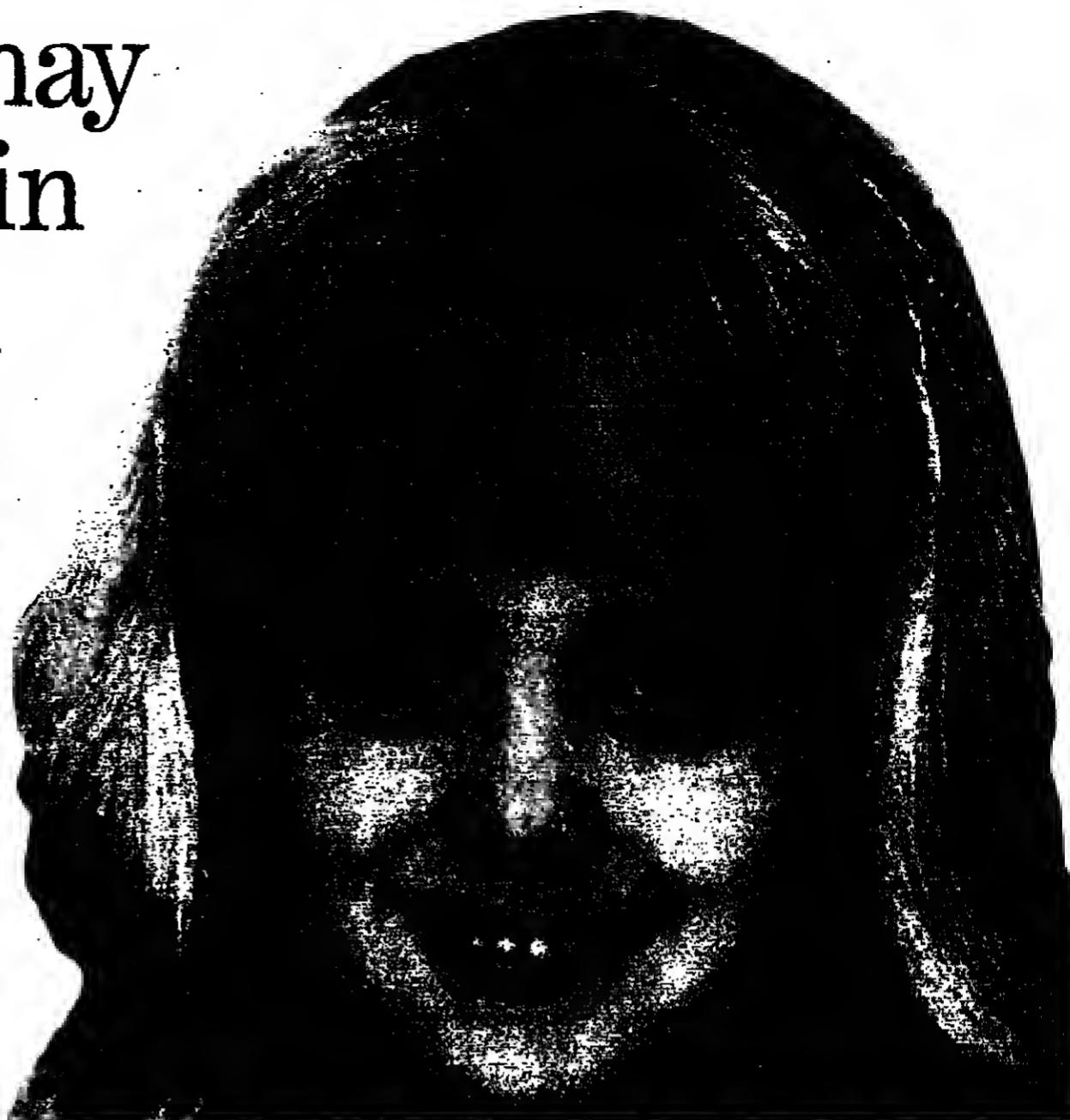
found around the house. The question of whether JonBenét was sexually assaulted was also left open, although early reports - later retracted - said she was.

The police have been criticised not only for failing to find the killer but for their handling of the case, starting with what is described as the cardinal error of not searching or sealing off as soon as the presumed kidnap was reported.

The Ramseys, who have retained separate lawyers and insist they are innocent, have put it about that an aggrieved former employee of Mr Ramsey might have had a motive for the killing, and cite the specific sum in the ransom demand.

They have also taken out newspaper advertisements offering a reward for information that could lead to their daughter's killer.

The police have taken repeated handwriting samples from Mrs Ramsey and have also taken DNA samples from Mr Ramsey. The results, in both cases, are said to have been inconclusive. The only other person thought to be in the family house at the time, JonBenét's brother Burke, aged nine, was ruled out of the inquiry at an early stage.



Victim: JonBenét Ramsey, found with a cord around her neck, according to the delayed post-mortem report

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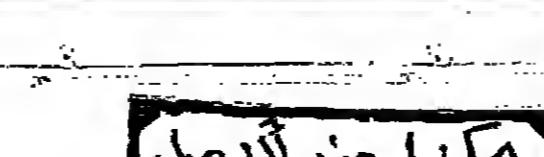
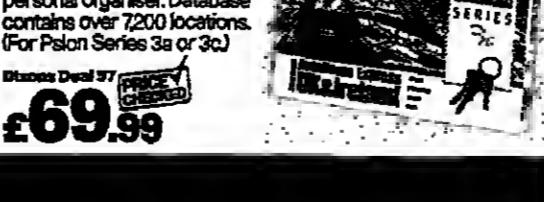
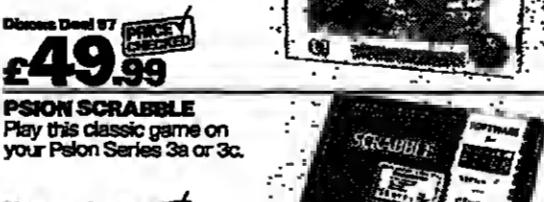
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Peace talks deadlock

Eric Silver
Jerusalem

President Bill Clinton's Middle East troubleshooter, Dennis Ross, held separate, last-minute talks last night with the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and the Palestinian President, Yasser Arafat, before flying back to Washington.

He had little to show for his four-day mission to revive the peace negotiations beyond the establishment of a joint panel of Israeli and Palestinian security chiefs, with officials of the CIA sitting in.

That may, however, be enough for the Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, to launch a personal rescue initiative as promised at the end of this month.

A jubilant Israeli said last night that Mr Ross had only created a framework. "It

has to be judged by content and results," he insisted. "Up to now, we haven't seen any concrete steps of the kind we think are vital if there is to be real cooperation against terrorism."

A summit meeting between Mr Netanyahu and King Hussein of Jordan earlier yesterday in the Jordanian Red Sea port of Aqaba was equally unproductive.

The Israeli leader rejected a Jordanian call to ease restrictions on 2 million West Bank and Gaza Palestinians, imposed after the 30 July suicide bombing in a Jerusalem market, which killed 14 Israeli civilians. He said Israel had intelligence information that further attacks were being planned.

Mr Netanyahu also declined to hand over tax revenues, collected by Israel on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, now estimated to be running at about

\$135m. Mr Arafat has had to raise bank loans to pay police and civil service salaries.

In another flick of muscles, Israeli bulldozers have this week demolished 10 Palestinian homes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, alleged to have been built without permits. Mr Netanyahu reiterated his claim that Israel was not punishing the Palestinian population.

The acarest to an Israeli co-operation in Aqaba was the Prime Minister's most explicit pledge so far to lift sanctions step-by-step with evidence that the Palestinian Authority was keeping its word and fighting the men of violence.

King Hussein put a brave face on the continuing stalemate, saying he hoped it was a turning point towards achieving a just peace. His listeners could only pray he knew something they didn't.

Crowds cheer 'vampire' hanging

Tehran (Reuters) - An Iranian serial killer dubbed "Tehran Vampire" was hanged from a mobile crane in Tehran yesterday as a crowd of about 20,000 people and dozens of bodies and body parts are still in the wreckage.

The crowd gathered at dawn at the Olympic Village district in west Tehran to see 28-year-old Gholamreza Khoshrav Kouran Kordiagh lashed by his victim's male relatives before his public execution. Khoshrav was condemned to death after confessing on television to the kidnap, rape and murder of nine girls and women aged 10 to 47 in four months this year.

Khoshrav carried out his crimes by night, posing as a freelance taxi driver, thus earning himself the title of the vampire.

"Innocent blood will always be avenged," a robed cleric told the crowd before the sentence was carried out.

Verses from the Koran, were relayed through loudspeakers to onlookers who had fought through two-mile traffic jams to get to the scene.

The crowd, kept away from the crane by a line of police, surged to the wall when Khoshrav was brought in front of them with his hands tied.

Officials threw Khoshrav down on his stomach where he was then given 214 lashes by male relatives of the victims. Members of the crowd counted out the number of lashes and cheered the relatives. Khoshrav was then led to the crane where a rope was placed around his neck before being slowly winched off the ground.

"He deserves worse," said Maryam Bakhti, a 29-year-old graduate, who said she got into Khoshrav's car one evening in 1994 and had to fight her way out of the car after he drove down a dark side street.

significant shorts

Crash relatives stage sit-in at Guam airport

Relatives of victims of last week's Korean Air crash staged a sit-in at Guam airport, angered by problems returning the remains to South Korea. About 50 protesters, sitting in front of the Korean Air counter, complained that the recovery of the remains from the crash site was taking too long. The disaster killed 226 people and dozens of bodies and body parts are still in the wreckage.

\$1bn bid for tank monopoly

General Dynamics bid \$1bn (£625m) for the military-vehicle producer United Defence LP, an acquisition that would face a major monopoly decision by the Clinton administration, because if General Dynamics succeeded it would become the sole US maker of tanks.

Reuters - New York

Chinese get the mobile habit

Forecasts for the booming Chinese mobile-phone market say the country should have more than 30 million users by 2000. Growing by an average of 160 per cent a year, the Chinese market is the third largest in the world, after the United States and Japan.

AP - Peking

Limp French excuse

The French sex drive is waning and more half of those queried for a survey on their private lives say they put up with long periods of chastity. A survey for *L'Evenement du Jeudi* showed 38 per cent of those polled were making love less than they used to and 42 per cent said their sex lives were unchanged. As for chastity, 52 per cent said they would not be bothered by a long period without making love.

Reuters - Paris

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inside north korea

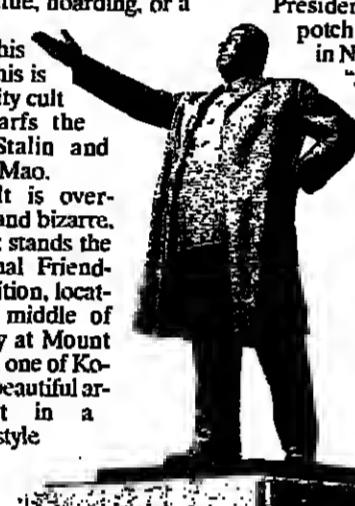
The Great Leader rules from beyond the grave

Stephen Vines in Pyongyang

North Korea has not had a head of state or, more importantly, a leader of the ruling Korean Worker's Party for more than three years. From a Korean point of view, though, both these posts are filled, aside from the small technicality that their incumbent is deceased.

Kim Il Sung, the "Great Leader", died in July 1994, having led his country for almost half a century. He left a chasm which the North Korean leadership is wary of filling. "The President will live for ever, therefore the President's seat will always be empty," explained an official guide in front of a giant bronze statue of the late leader depicted with his hand outstretched to the people.

The late leader lives on in many ways. Every adult citizen wears a badge carrying his portrait. It is almost impossible to walk more than five minutes in any city without meeting a Kim Il Sung statue, hoarding, or a building



Bronze statue of Kim Il Sung

named in his honour. This is a personality cult which dwarfs the cults of Stalin and Chairman Mao. The cult is overwhelming and bizarre. At its apex stands the International Friendship Exhibition, located in the middle of the country at Mount Myohyang, one of Korea's most beautiful areas. Built in a traditional style (unlike most buildings which resemble the worst excesses of early Soviet brutalism), it is a gargantuan shrine to the Great Leader and to his son the Dear Leader. The twist to the shrine's story is that it is stuffed with "61,000 valuable presents", given to the two leaders by people from all over the world. A "spontaneous" poem by Kim Il Sung puts it this way: "The country ruined by cringing and subjected to so much suffering, is now thronged by goodwill missions from all lands." The re-

ality is that North Korea is probably the most diplomatically isolated nation on earth. The only mission "thronging" its doors are of aid donors trying to alleviate the economic disaster resulting from President Kim's rule. Reality is not allowed inside this sacred place, where shoes must be discarded and bowing before images of the Great Leader is not voluntary. Most of the population has been shepherded around the exhibition. It exists, it is claimed, as proof of the international popularity of the two Kims and it locates North Korea at the epicentre of world affairs.

Like every other successful Asian Communist leader, Kim Il Sung paid more attention to nationalism than to the international ideas of Karl Marx. President Kim's hotch-potch theory, dignified in North Korea as the "Juche Idea", revolves essentially around the notion of self-reliance. Basically it says that Koreans can do anything they set their minds to. Then, remembering that Socialist internationalism ought to come into this, the Juche Idea generously suggests that the same principles apply to other peoples too. Bookshelves in North Korea are crammed with variations of turgidly written nonsense on this. To an outsider these seem gibberish, but they are studied with reverence by Koreans.

"Frankly speaking, 95 per cent of the people regard Kim Il Sung as their father," said the guide. It was not made clear what fate would befall the 5 per cent who had other views. However, it is becoming increasingly

clear that Kim Jong Il, Kim Il Sung's eldest son from his second marriage, is about to step into his father's huge shoes. Alexandre Mansurov, a former Soviet diplomat in North Korea, said in a recent interview

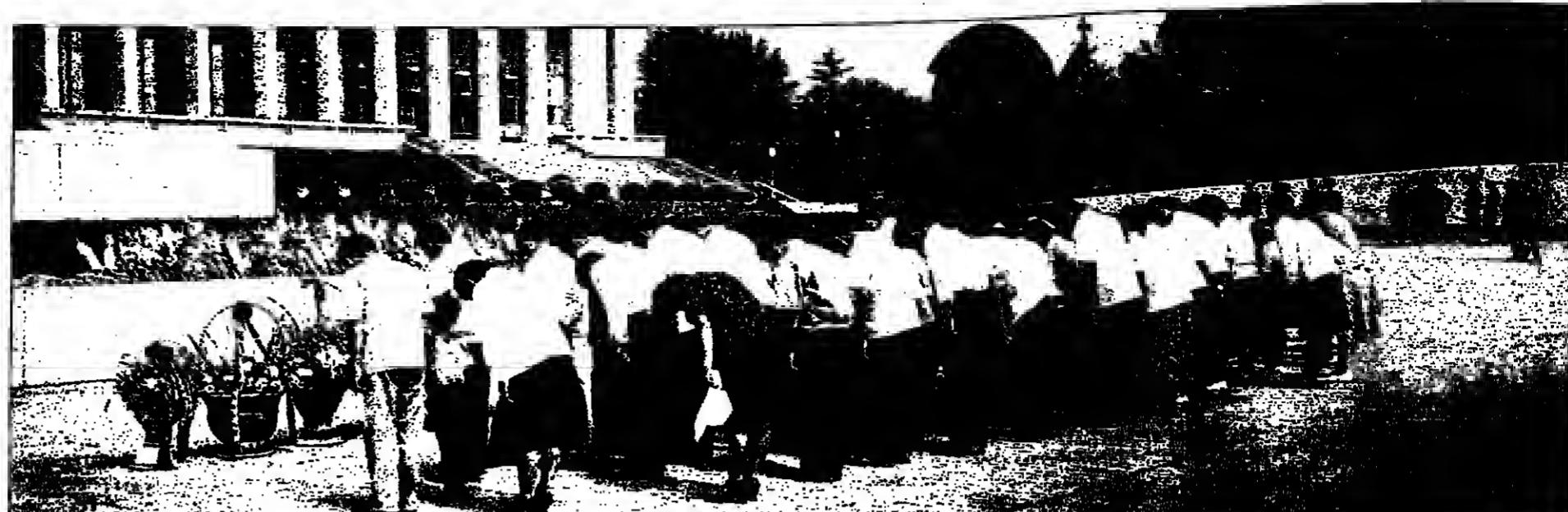
with *Newsweek* that the son will be formally inaugurated as president in October according to invitations that Russia has received. However, Kim Jong Il is but a shadow of his father. Brian Bridges, an expert on North Korea from Hong Kong's Lingnan University, describes him as a "dimwit". "He just doesn't have the intellect to run it all."

Kim Jong Il's late father erected a one-party state with Soviet assistance after the Second World War. Early days were dominated by the ruthless elimination of all opposition, and there is still no real dissent now. But Dr Bridges believes that the leadership cannot stay unchallenged for much longer. "The crunch must come in the

first half of 1998", he predicts. By then the food crisis will be out of control and, he believes, a part of the elite will break away and say "we really have to do something drastic". Foreign officials in the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, are less sure that anything will happen so soon, though they accept the crunch will come and that the last unblinking Stalinist regime will have to change in the end.

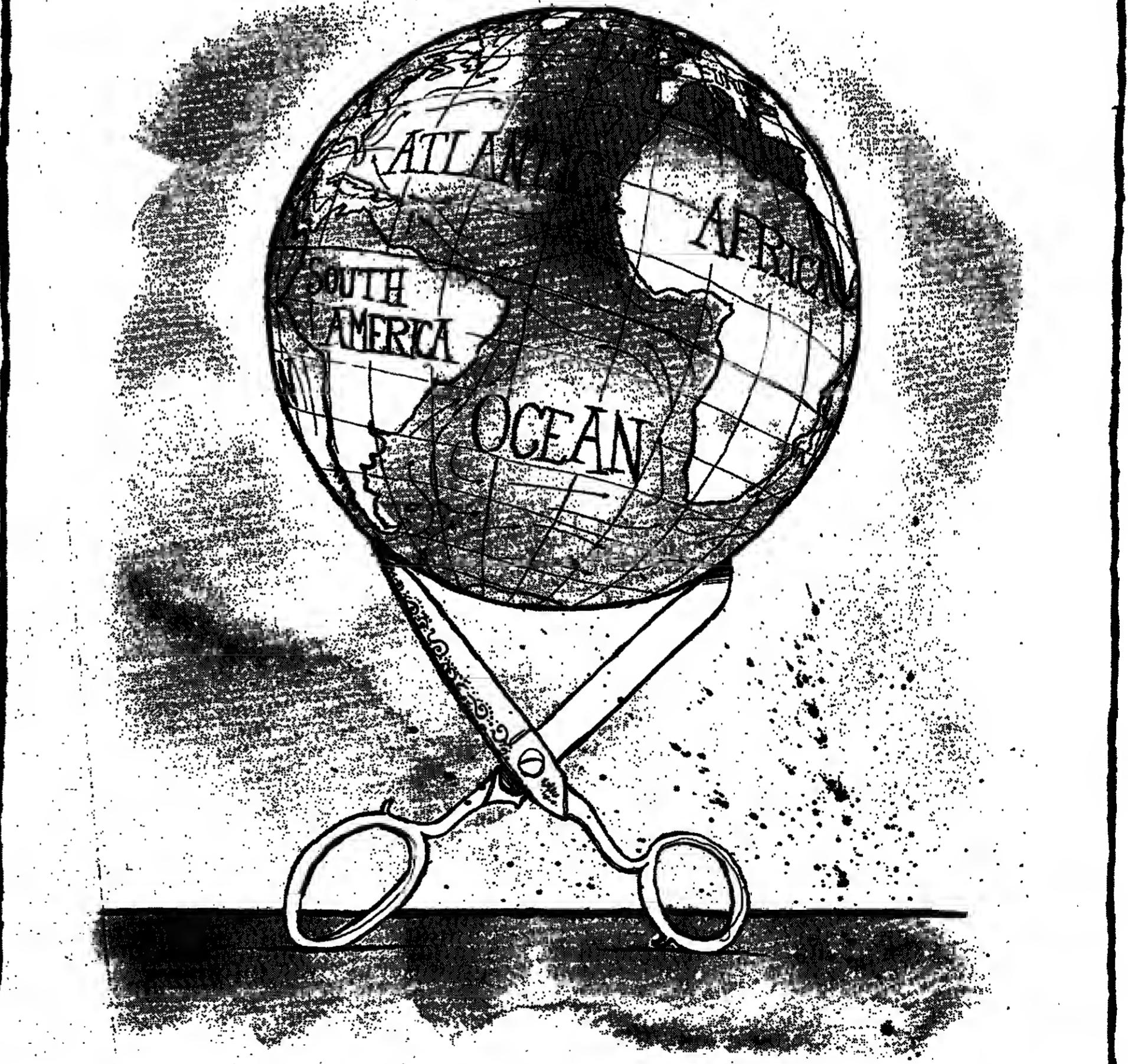
"What you see right now is the unravelling of a system which must have been fairly good 20 years ago," one said. Nevertheless, he argues, "they can continue for a very long time. Believe me, these people still have trust in the leadership, their tolerance level is so high".

■ This is the second article in a three-part series.



Cult figure: North Koreans bowing before a memorial to Kim Il Sung in Pyongyang. The president died three years ago, but still dominates North Korea. Photographs: Stephen Vines

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Lance Barnard

Lance Barnard shook Australia during one of the most exciting periods in Australian politics, the fortnight in 1972 known as the "two-man government". His partner in this episode was Gough Whitlam, who led the Australian Labor Party to power in November of that year after 23 years in the electoral wilderness. Barnard was Whitlam's deputy leader, and the two men set about reforming public life at a pace that has never been equalled before or since.

Without waiting for the customary two weeks that it would normally take the newly-elected Labor MPs to gather and elect a front bench, as the rules then decreed, Whitlam and Barnard divided between themselves the entire spread of ministerial portfolios and fired off a volley of executive decisions that left Australians smacked.

The outgoing conservative



Barnard: toll to Whitlam
Photograph: Camera Press

Liberal-National coalition had been in power since 1949. It was tired, plagued by dull leadership and out of touch with a new generation of baby-boomer voters. For Labor supporters, the atmosphere was not unlike that of Britain in 1997, when the torpor of a sclerotic administration

was swept away and the excitement of a new political era unfolded.

The Whitlam-Barnard duumvirate became an earthquake under Australia's stolidly conservative political landscape. Whitlam held 13 ministeries, Barnard 14, including defence, the portfolio that he retained when normality was restored after the full ministry was sworn in.

The duo's first act was to abolish conscription to the armed forces, which the conservatives had introduced eight years earlier to bolster Australia's controversial commitment of troops to the Vietnam war. Then they released draft dodgers from prison and announced that Australia's remaining soldiers in Vietnam would be brought home. The youth of Australia applauded.

Next, the two-man government abolished British imperial

honours down under and replaced them with an Australian honours system. They announced that Australia would recognise the People's Republic of China, thawing a Cold War diplomatic freeze, banned the granting of mining leases on Aboriginal reserves, refused entry of racially selected sporting teams to Australia and started moves to grant independence to Papua New Guinea, Australia's northern neighbour.

Gordon Bilney, then an Australian representative at the United Nations, and later a Labor minister, captured the excitement of those times when he said: "By the time the dumprate had been operating for a week, all I wanted was to get back to Australia as soon as I could. There were thousands like me, accustomed to cringing culturally when, as an Australian abroad, one was either thought of as an Austrian or as

a variety of South African, but who quickly found reason to take pride in what the new government was doing."

With a typical flourish, Whitlam described his interregnum with Barnard as "the smallest ministry with jurisdiction over Australia since a temporary British administration under the Duke of Wellington in 1844". Barnard himself was more down-to-earth. "It was the most interesting period of my life," he said. "This had never occurred before in the history of Australia. The public were, I think, pleased something was being done. We were sworn in on the Monday, on the Tuesday conscription had ended and I had arranged for national service personnel to leave the camps as they wanted to."

The remarks say much about the differences between these two unlikely partners. Whitlam was a "new Labor" man, a

lawyer who prided himself on his erudition and who found few close friends among his team. Barnard was a traditional Labor man, a teacher from Tasmania with no pretensions to match his leader's intellectual reach but whose practicality and unfudging loyalty Whitlam treasured.

Whitlam, now 81, praised

Barnard fulsomely on his death.

According to Ross McMillan, author of *The Light on the Hill*, a history of the Australian Labor Party, Barnard was one of the few friends that Whitlam made among federal Labor MPs. "Barnard's most important attribute was being a foil to Whitlam, something that helped to keep Gough on the rails."

Barnard was born into a political family in Launceston, Tasmania, and educated at Launceston Technical School.

His father held the local federal

seat of Bass for 15 years, dur-

ing which he was a minister in the post-war Labor government headed by Ben Chifley. Lance Barnard served with the Australian army in the Middle East during the Second World War. The battle of El Alamein, where he was an artillery officer, left him with permanent hearing damage.

Barnard himself won his father's old seat at the 1954 general election and held it for 21 years. In 1974, he was unseated as deputy prime minister by Jim Cairns, a scion of the Left. The following year, Barnard told Whitlam he wanted to retire from politics. Whitlam appointed him Australia's ambassador to Sweden, Finland and Norway.

Robert Milliken

Lance Herbert Barnard, politician; born Launceston, Tasmania 1 May 1919; Deputy Prime Minister of Australia 1972-74; Minister for Defence 1972-75; died Melbourne 6 August 1997.

Bill Shine

What set Bill Shine apart from most character actors was a readiness to have a go at anything which did not compromise his genial gusto.

In the classics or intimate revue, Ealing comedy or Victorian melodrama, Restoration comedy or English farce, his fine in affable loafers, military gentleman, vacuous dandies and dim-witted aristocrats made him one of the busiest and most popular of supporting players on stage or screen for almost seven decades. Toff or twerp, be did not mind, as long as he could register his brand of British or Irish fun – he had particular successes in Shaw, O'Casey and Paul Vincent Carroll – and that unpretentious zest and snappy timing that were part of his technical equipment.

One of the last players to understand the dramatic uses and abuses of a monocle in comedy, farce and pantomime (as squires and harlots), Shine could disport himself in old-fashioned musical comedy with as much relish as he brought to Irish melodrama. He was, after all, born into the business.

His father Wilfred Shine ruled in melodrama of all sorts in the early part of the century and even while Billy was a boy, toured the Lancashire comedy The Jeffersons for seven unbroken years. In 1924 he brought it to London. To the critic James Agate's grief, it founded, not because it was a bundle of clichés, but because Londoners could not understand the humour of Lancashire as Agate did.

Apart from his notable father, Shine's mother, two uncles, an aunt and grandmother were also on the stage. It was while learning his trade sweeping it as call boy or watching from the wings that young Billy was judged qualified to make his

début. In 1917 he played a Stork in *Princess Posy* at the Winter Gardens, New Brighton.

At 15 he appeared with Sybil Thorndike and Charles Laughton at the Arts Theatre in George Moore's Shakespeare play, *The Making of an Immortal*, but far from going into the theatre Shine seized the chance to work in the talkies throughout the next decade, the Thirties. He made 164 British films between 1929 (*High Seas, The Flying Scotsman and Under The Greenwood Tree*) and 1971 (*Not Tonight, Darling*).

Highlights in between ranged from Sir Percy Blakeney in *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1934) to Ealing comedy, Tommy Trinder's *Champagne Charlie* (1944) to *The Red Shoes* (1948), *The Chiltern Hundreds* (1949), *Father Brown* (1954), *The Deep Blue Sea* (1955), *Richard III* (1955) and *Blue Murder at St Trinian's* (1957). One of his most characteristic supporting parts on screen was that of the wizard-prince type of public school RAF officer; though since he was making as many as four films a year (and usually also appearing on stage at night), Shine's talent for the cameo appearance was never easy to pin down.

During the Second World War, though, he was back on stage touring for the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (later to become the Arts Council) in a repertoire of plays headed by Shaw's *The Man of Destiny*. Then he joined what every playgoer then regarded as the next best thing to a national theatre, since subsidised theatre was then underwritten by Alec Clunes's Festival of English Drama at the Arts. It started with seasons of Farquhar, Sheridan, Pinero and Shaw, and Shine was in everything. I still remember him amusingly alighting on that tiny stage in a pair of angel's wings

which he made a fine Svengali) and *The Bells*. How to avoid burlesquing such pieces while playing them for all they were worth? The audience could be as much of a nuisance as anything, giggling at every chance, yet silence was finally imposed by an indefinable theatrical power and Shine knew how to keep both his face and his acting straight.

A year later some of that power was felt again at the old St James's Theatre in London where he played Sewer Man to Marita Hunt's Mad Woman of Chaillot. Shine surely had something of his father's spirit in him. Even if most modern memories

recall first the handle-bar moustache, the upper-class accent and the gallery of well-intentioned bunglers, addle-brained aristocrats, amiable incompetents and a whole range of RAF types, eccentric clerics and charming loafers, Shine was trained in a school where the whole physicality counted for theatrical expression. He had long since learned how to turn tailness, a sleepy-eyed look, a nimble carriage and a lean build to commanding advantage; whether as Lord Summersay in *Misalliance* (1943), Horace Vale in *The Magistrate* (1944), King Phillip II of Spain in *That Lady* (1951),

or Lord Foppington in *Vanbrugh's Virtue in Danger* (1966) or Lord Littlehampton in *Maudie* (1974).

On television his most recent part in the 1980s was that of the eccentric inventor Black in the series *Supergran*, with (of course) smoking jacket and cap. Clechis? Shine gave them a new sheen.

Adam Benedict

Wilfred William Denis Shine, actor; born London 20 October 1911; married first Julia Lang (one son; marriage dissolved 1949), second 1949 Diana Cecil (neé Marsh; one son); died London 24 July 1997.

Luther Allison

The death of blues musician Luther Allison has come at a particularly poignant time, when he was making the best music of his career and being recognised as one of the leading exponents of the blues guitar. In May 1997 he had won three W.C. Handy blues awards including Blues Entertainer of the Year. This August Bank Holiday weekend was due to headline the Great British R&B Festival at Colne, Lancashire.

With his new success, Allison had developed a potent blend of blues, soul, funk and rock 'n' roll. He often worked with a born section and he was known for performing energetic, two-hour sets at festivals. In the UK, he played with success at both the Burnley Blues Festival and the Great British R&B Festival.

Luther Allison was born in Mayflower, Arkansas, in 1939. He was the 14th of 15 children and his father and brothers worked in the cottonfields. In 1951 the family moved to Chicago and Luther found himself at school with Muddy Waters' son. His brother Ollie was already working as a blues musician and Luther started playing his guitar. He also accompanied some of his other brothers in a gospel group, the Southern Travellers.

In 1957 a blues group was formed to play the Bungalow Club in Chicago. The line-up included Luther and his brother Grant, and they called them-

selves the Rolling Stones, after a Muddy Waters' song. They soon tired of the name and became the Four Jivers. Allison was becoming a skilled guitarist, influenced by B. B. King and Otis Rush, and he was encouraged to sing by Freddie King. When King found work outside Chicago, he took over his residency at a local club.

Luther also jammed on stage with Howlin' Wolf and for several years was a blues journeyman, working with Little Richard, Magic Slim and Muddy Waters.

In 1967 he achieved some national recognition through the compilation album *Sweet Home Chicago*, for Delmark Records. This prompted Delmark to record an album, *Love Me Mama*, with him and his then group, the Blue Nebulae, in 1969. The label's manager, Bob Koester, said that he believed Allison to be "one of the most original exponents of the modern blues". The same year he appeared at the Ann Arbor Blues Festival and played on the albums *Further On Up*, *The Road to Shaky Lake Harris and Slim's Got This Thing Goin' On* by Sunnyland Slim.

Solo success seemed possible when he became the first – and, in the event, the only – blues performer to sign with the famous Motown label, but the organisation did not know how to promote the three albums he made for their subsidiary, the Southern Travellers. In 1957 a blues group was formed to play the Bungalow Club in Chicago. The line-up included Luther and his brother Grant, and they called them-



Photograph: Dave Peabody / Redferns

"I'm unstoppable": Allison at the 100 Club, London in 1988

zine *Guitar Player* thought it combined "the wisdom of a master storyteller with the elegance of B. B. King, the elasticity of Buddy Guy and the big sting of Albert King". The second album, *Blue Streak* (1995), topped the US blues charts for 19 weeks. Acknowledging the applause at the Chicago Blues Festival, he shouted, "I'm not

only back. I'm unstoppable." On 10 July while performing on stage, Luther Allison felt dizzy and lost co-ordination. He was taken to hospital where he was diagnosed as having inoperable lung cancer. He cancelled appearances and in order to help with medical bills, a fund-raising night at the 100 Club in London had just been arranged

only back. I'm unstoppable." His best epitaph would be a line from a *Guitar Player* review: "He played the blues as his life was hanging in the balance". Spencer Leigh

Luther Allison, singer and guitarist; born Mayflower, Arkansas 17 August 1939; married (one son); died Madison, Wisconsin 12 August 1997.

In 1955-57 I shared a small lab with Drummond Matthews at the FIDS base on Signy Island in the South Orkneys, wrote W. L. N. Tickell.

Bob White's obituary [1 August] was rather dismissive of the Antarctic experience. Matthews quickly became a resourceful and resourceful polar traveller and his knowledge of Coronation Island was equalled only by that of his companion and surveyor, Dougles Bridger. In the southern win-

ter of 1956 fast ice did not form in the South Orkneys, so it was not possible to sledge across the sea, but Matthews manhandled sledges over glaciers and mountains during three expeditions on Coronation Island. Matthews Island was named after him.

Before his PhD Drum

Matthews had already been the senior author of a FIDS publication that today remains a major work on the geology of the South Orkney Islands.

Patrick Cosgrave

Tom Norman, businessman and politician; born 12 March 1917; MP (Conservative) for Cheadle 1970-87; UK MEP 1973-79; MEP (Conservative) for Cheshire East, 1979-89; K1 1987; married 1942 Annabel Yates (two sons, one daughter); died 6 August 1997.

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Before his PhD Drum

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Changing of the Guard

The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services. Weddings anniversaries. In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor: The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephone 0171-293 2012 or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at 55.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

Birthdays

Miss Sarah Brightman, soprano, 36; Mr Ronald Campbell MP, 54; Mr David Crosby, singer, 56; Mrs Jennifer d'Abro, chairman, Moyes Stevens Investments, 52; Mr Fred Davis, snooker player, 84; Vice Admiral John Dunt, Chief of Defence Staff (Systems), 53; Mr Buddy Greco, jazz pianist and singer, 71; Mr David Hopkinson, footballer, 41; Mr Alan Jackson, footballer, 21; The Rev Dom Anthony Philip Jebb, for-

mer Headmaster, Downside School, 65; Professor Sir Andrew Kay, surgeon, 61; Sir Stuart McMillan, High Court judge, 59; Sir Robin McDowall, former ambassador to China, 63; Mr Steve Martin, actor and comedian, 52; Lord Mishcon, solicitor, 82; Dr Oliver Neill, consultant to Ciba, 63; Mr Frederick Raphael, architect, 66; Mrs Amy Scarsell, 52; Sir Ronald Shrimpton, former chairman, London Brick Co, 94; The Right Revd Michael Thompson, Bishop of Exeter, 68; writer and author of "Rock of Ages", 77; George Combe, physiologist, 1858; Alfred Charles William Hemswoorth, first Viscount Northcliffe, newspaper proprietor, 1922; William Randolph Hearst, newspaper proprietor, 1951; Bertrand Breath, writer, 1956; Clifford Odets, playwright, 1963; Leonard Sidney Woolf, publisher, 1968; Oscar Levant, composer and pianist, 1972; John Boynton Priestley, novelist and playwright, 1994. On this day the French released William of Orange at the bat-

tle of Mons, 1678; Tristan da Cunha was annexed to Great Britain, 1816; Cologne Cathedral, started in 1248, was completed, 1880; the steamer *Blunder*, carrying \$3m in gold, struck an iceberg off Alaska and sank, with the loss of 70 lives, 1901; the BBC started its first feature film on television, *The Student of Prague*, with Anton Walbrook, 1958; Japan surrendered to the Allies unconditionally, 1945; after peace talks in Cyprus broke down, Turkish troops launched an attack on Nicosia, 1974. Today is

the Feast Day of St Athanasius of Aegina, St Eusebius of Rome, St Pachomius, St Marcellus of Apamea, St Maximilian Kolbe.

Lectures

National Gallery: Kathleen Adler, "Tall, Dark and Handsome? (ii): *Diego, Carlo Pelizzetti*", 1pm.

British Museum: Angela Evans, " Sutton Hoo 1938-91: the story of the excavations", 1.15pm.

Hume has a bigger job than being president

Just to see Ken Maginnis and Martin McGuinness engaged in debate on the BBC the other night was a revelation. In conventional terms, their televised meeting advanced no positions, saw no meeting of minds. But the very animation of their encounter once they had shown they could talk to one another was compelling evidence that meetings and conversation have to be the way forward in Northern Ireland.

The immediate prospects for the resumption of peace talks including both Sinn Fein and enough Unionists to make major representation credible remain dim, but there are good auguries. There is, for example, the moderation and flexibility displayed by the August marchers, and Mr Maginnis's growing belief that there is a Unionist case to be made before uncommitted audiences.

During the past few days, however, the sky has darkened over another quarter of Ulster, although this may seem a strange way to greet the possibility that the leader of the SDLP, the moderate nationalist John Hume, is considering allowing his name to go forward for the presidency of the Irish Republic.

Mr Hume is clearly interested. It is indeed a position for which he might be said to be uniquely qualified. He is a veteran of the peaceful struggle for the unification of the island of Ireland into a single state. His party has pro-

vided legitimacy to umpteen attempts to start and continue dialogue between Protestant and Catholic, nationalists and legitimists, between the British and Irish governments. Mr Hume has operated as go-between, interlocutor, confidential agent, able to converse with Sinn Fein without losing the respect of some, at least, of the Unionists. Would not electing him president of the Irish Republic be a sign and symbol of the essentially peaceful intent of most Irish nationalists, north and south of the United Kingdom's border with Ireland? Would not the election of a member of the United Kingdom's House of Commons (who is also a member of the European Parliament) indicate just how close-bound are the politics of Britain and Ireland? Would not his election accelerate the peace process by placing at the heart of the Irish state a man of the North who is committed, heart and soul, to peaceful rearrangement of Ireland's political geography?

Unfortunately, the answers are no, no and no. Mr Hume's candidacy would doubtless play well in the United States of America, where they like their Irish symbolism as brash as the banners in a St Patrick's Day parade. Mr Hume is evidently popular in the Republic, and his candidacy would solve a lot of problems there. His standing would get the leaders of Fianna Fail and to a lesser extent the other parties off the book — they would not have to

campaign or (hard on the heels of a general election) pay for a campaign.

Mr Hume would be a neat-seeming replacement for the popular Mary Robinson. In a very different way, he has star qualities, as she does.

But the evident desire of Bertie Ahern and his colleagues in the Irish cabinet to see the post of president filled by someone with a little more glamour than their party colleague Albert Reynolds does not make a convincing case for Mr Hume. The Irish presidency is a part-time job. Mrs Robinson may have cut an attractive figure but a cold-eyed appraisal of her

achievement would find it hard to identify much in mainstream political life. She has cheered people up and helped to make the Irish feel good about themselves at a time when the Republic has become an Atlantic tiger economy. She has very definitely kept out of the affairs of Northern Ireland (beyond an innocuous walkabout in Belfast) and out of social affairs of the Republic too, beyond offering Irish womanhood a more compelling role model than either Diana or Sinead O'Connor. And this is in the nature of the job. It is not a movers-and-shakers job: it is a figurehead job.

More than that, though, a John Hume candidacy would be bad for the Republic and bad for the prospect of peace in Northern Ireland. Ireland, it so happens, is going to need quite a lot of symbolic politics during the next few years as it negotiates the shoals of the Euro (Ireland joins, Britain doesn't), the expansion of the European Union eastwards and reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. There is talent aplenty in the Irish business community — isn't there an acceptable candidate to be found there? Mr Hume deserves a great deal at the hands of his fellow country people, north and south, but his job and that of the SDLP is not over. He is too valuable to the peace process to go now. Not only would Sinn Fein benefit from further erosion of the SDLP's constituency strength — an inevitable result of John Hume's departure — but an essential counterweight

union with Britain? No. John Hume's candidacy would be regarded by even moderate Unionist opinion as a subterfuge, to obtain by symbols what should only come about, if at all, by the free assent of majorities. For the sake of his neighbours in Ulster and his country — however he defines its borders — Mr Hume should immediately declare himself *hors de combat* in order to focus, yet again, on the road to consensual peace.

Save a Guard — aim for that bear

What's the point of the Commonwealth if truck drivers in Ontario are not prepared to drive a bit more recklessly? Canadian forces have not been killing enough black bears to satisfy our Ministry of Defence. The MoD needs some 50 bearskins a year to clothe the heads of the Foot Guards. (Artificial alternatives become bedraggled "like a bad hair day".) But in this age of animal rights, only bears already dead of natural causes will do. Here is one of those modern moments — political leaders who won't let fighting men wear dead animal skins — which would have every earlier generation of soldier, from Caesar to Slim, gaping slack-jawed with incomprehension.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Confusion over student fees policy

Sir: Your headline on the Government's higher education fees proposal, "Last minute bid to avoid fiasco over fees exemption" (13 August), is exactly right — a fiasco is precisely what the Government has created.

I have every sympathy for my constituent Lily Williams, quoted in your article as "disillusioned" over the Government's conduct. She and many others have written to me in complete confusion over the Government's intentions. There was nothing in Labour's manifesto to indicate the direction they were intending to take, nor does there appear to have been much strategic thinking behind the hurried announcement of a waiver of fees for voluntary work, and their even more buried announcement that all students with deferred entry may be exempt.

It is astonishing that the Department for Education and Employment was prepared to leak these waiver rumours at the weekend yet refused in the following days to publish full details to reassure worried students. This government, having pledged priority for "education, education, education", now appears to be bent on spin, fudge and betrayal.

Dr EVAN HARRIS MP
(Oxford West and Abingdon,
Lib Dem)
House of Commons
London SW1

Sir: David Walker ("Why university is a journey too far", 11 August), is led astray by stereotypes.

His argument is that most students are middle class (true). It costs public money to allow students to live away from home (true). This represents a subsidy to the middle class (true — up to a point). Therefore students should live at home.

The conclusion is false. If the "subsidy" were to be withdrawn, it would mean that students would live at home — unless, of course, they could afford to live at university and thereby gain the benefits that Mr Walker sneers at. (Getting a worthwhile degree requires more than nine-to-five commitment.)

For the wealthy, with a home computer, books, car, ample private living and working space etc, losing this subsidy would be a drag but not a disaster. For the working-class student the loss would make higher education all but impossible. They could certainly never hope to compete on level terms.

The social class distribution of university education is skewed enough as it is. Forcing students to study from home would make the situation worse.

P K BURGESS
President
Association of University Teachers
London W11

Sir: Over 20 years ago I left North London to study for a degree in Middlesbrough. Aside from giving me an insight into a North-East culture still little appreciated in the South, it also forced me to take responsibility for my own actions, in a way that probably would not have occurred had I stayed in London near or with my parents. The result of my trip north was that I got a good honours degree, which I was definitely a socialist and I still get on with my parents. I think it is time to be called a liberal education.

KEITH FLETT
London N17



Sir: David Walker quotes a Leeds University professor as saying, "Students who live at home don't integrate; it limits the range of experience they are subjected to; they are not as rounded as students."

That is a nonsensical generalisation. All Open University students live at home yet many are among the most socially and intellectually rounded undergraduate and postgraduate students in Britain.

Dr GARY SLAPPER
Director, The Law Programme
The Open University
Milton Keynes,
Buckinghamshire

'Ignorant' love of music

Sir: Adrian Jack cannot be allowed to get away with his pompous and intemperate attack on "ignorant listeners" at Evgeny Kissin's Prom (review, 12 August) who "didn't know that it's traditional in this particular work to begin the scherzo virtually *attacca* (played without a pause)" and "started applauding the first movement" of the Chopin Sonata. The central joy of the Proms is that there are thousands of ignorant, but passionate, listeners delighting in this extraordinary music festival. Who cares if the triumphant end of a movement brilliantly played brings a burst of applause, however ignorant? Certainly not the composers, who were used to it.

As for Mr Jack's *Sturm und Drang* encouragement of the BBC to "tell audiences not to clap between movements", perhaps they would

also ask concertgoers not to re-tune, forbid audience members who have been struggling not to cough during the music from clearing their throats and sack any conductor who wipes his brow, lest any of these neeps Mr Jack's obviously very brittle concentration.

MICHAEL VARCOE-COCKS
London W6

Boredom in the infantry

Sir: The Army may recruit from the "scum" of this divided society ("What do we want, monks or robots?", 6 August), but they have little to occupy their free time except drink.

A young infantryman I know, a good rugger player, finds he rarely has a chance to play team sports, and the chances of educational courses are nil. He has done well to be a lance corporal, but succeeding in a tough course for promotion to corporal means that he will not get that extra stripe for perhaps 18 months. So there is a lot of boredom in the ranks.

I understand that the American services have had a campaign to decrease drunkenness by providing many more facilities for energetic leisure activities, and support for educational courses. It seems that similar facilities are much needed not only in Cyprus, but also in Germany and other Army bases.

MOLLY ROSENTHAL
Denbigh

Heavy price of angering the US

Sir: Simon Faulkner (letter, 9 August) is right to dub the sanctions regime against Iraq "barbaric". The United States is currently blocking dozens of food and medicine shipments to Iraq, allowable even under UN Resolution 986. I have in my possession a copy of a letter signed by David H Harmon, acting supervisor of the Office of Foreign Assets Control (US Treasury), in which he threatens aid workers illegally collecting and transporting medical relief supplies to the people of Iraq with "up to 12 years in prison and \$1m in fines".

The blocking of civilian access to food and medicine, as a means of punishing "pariah" states, is now part of American policy, pursued through the United Nations where possible and unilaterally, through extraterritorial legislation, where not.

Apart from Iraq, Cuba is the most obvious victim. Through domestic law (primarily the 1992 Cuban Democracy Act and the 1996 Helms-Burton Act) the US is fostering malnutrition in the civilian population. The American Association for World Health, the US committee for the World Health Organisation, reported in March 1997 that US policy on Cuba was contributing to "serious nutritional defects, particularly among pregnant women ... food shortages were linked to a devastating outbreak of

neuropathy numbering in the tens of thousands".

The US blockage on Cuban access to water-treatment chemicals and spare parts for water-supply systems has led to a "rising incidence of morbidity and mortality". Denied nausea-preventing drugs, 35 surveyed children in a cancer ward "were vomiting on average 28 to 30 times a day". The last UN General Assembly vote (October 1996) on US policy towards Cuba was 137 against and three for.

Washington worked hard to impose Iraq-style sanctions on Libya, via an extension of Security Council Resolution 748 (1992), but was frustrated by the European need for Libyan oil. The US urged total UN sanctions on North Korea in 1991. Here Iraq-style sanctions were blocked by the threat of a Chinese veto in the Security Council.

American foreign policy represents a multifaceted violation of the UN Genocide Convention (Articles II and III) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

GEOFF SIMONS
Stockport, Greater Manchester

Sir: Let me set readers' minds at rest following Rob Brown's piece about the future of *Newsnight* (11 August). There is no plan to make the programme "kinder" or "softer" as he alleges. This is not to say that *Newsnight* will not evolve.

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number. Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk. E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret we are unable to acknowledge unpublished letters.

All programmes do over time. But it is a mistake to equate a broader agenda with a softer agenda.

Newsnight will maintain its commitment to rigorous analytical journalism, whether achieved through crafted tape packages or searching studio interviews.

The suggestion that the viewing figure of 1.3 million for the Saturday editions of *Newsnight* during the election was about four times that of a "bad night" during the week is inaccurate. In the week of 20 July, for example, the programme averaged 1.2 million.

JOHN MORRISON
Editor, Daily News Programmes
BBC News
London W12

Sir: I was absolutely stunned to read (report, 9 August) that the French are considered by tourists to be "chronically rude, aggressive, dirty, idle and disorganized". I have just returned from a holiday in Languedoc and found the complete opposite.

Was the young salesman in Monoprix at Béziers "idle" when he took the trouble to take a shirt out of a sealed packet for my husband to try on? Was the waitress in our hotel "dirty" when she dusted the tables and examined every glass before we ate outside? Was the charming elderly gentleman in Montpellier "rude and aggressive" when he showed me where the town centre was and wished me a happy day in Tarn?

I say "Vive la France" — I can't wait to visit again.

JOSE SEGAL
Harrow, Middlesex

The problem

God can solve

Sir: In defence of the Christian faith I cannot let Lynne Wallis's article "Praise the Lord? Not me" (8 August) pass without comment.

If it had been directed at other believing groups, such as Muslims, or social groups such as gays, the riots might have already occurred.

I come into the category of possessing "a great yawning gap in fill, or a problem I imagine God will help me overcome". I suppose she is right, as He has given eternal life, the lack of which had hitherto been a problem.

JOHN SLOAN
Leeds

Sir: The Rev Neil Gardner (letter, 12 August) asks who Lynne Wallis thinks first advocated Sunday as a day of rest, and answers: "God, I believe." "No, He didn't". It was the Emperor Constantine.

The Sabbath is the biblical seventh day of rest. Sunday was the eighth day, when He "created" Adam — a working day.

Sunday, called the Lord's Day in Christianity, is the weekly memorial of the resurrection of the Christ from the dead on the first day of the week. Constantine introduced the first civil legislation concerning Sunday in 321 when he decreed that all work should cease on Sunday, except that farmers could work if necessary.

REG HEMS
Cockfosters, Hertfordshire

Sir: Grammar tests are to be put on ice because "many English teachers [are] not confident about teaching sentence structure" (report, 12 August). In other words, they don't know how to construe the language they purport to teach. How did they qualify as English teachers?

Mrs A FULLER
Tamworth, Staffordshire

interview

The master of spin goes in to bat

Peter Mandelson defends himself, in conversation with Donald Macintyre, against accusations that he is the 'self-appointed acting PM', and explains why he wants to be elected to Labour's NEC

It's Tuesday night, and a world quite outside the media and political beltway Peter Mandelson is normally assumed to inhabit. Labour's most controversial figure is charming a large group of leading Asian journalists and editors in Westminster's best known Indian restaurant.

The event was arranged only last Thursday, but everyone who is anyone in the thriving South Asian sector of London's fourth estate is out in force. The atmosphere is convivial, the curry the Kundan's most delicious, the MP Keith Vaz's welcoming speech a gracious tribute to how much "we in the Labour Party all owe to the Minister without Portfolio". In his own speech Mandelson lays heavy emphasis on the need to improve race relations, and he appeals to the editors to help make the Millennium Experience a true celebration for every aspect of a "multi-faith multi-community" British society. There is the obligatory garland – of appropriately red roses – to go round the minister's neck. There are quite a lot of jokes about his ubiquity; the distinguished Indian magazine editor K.K. Singh remarks that the Minister without Portfolio is really "the minister of every portfolio". But then Mandelson describes how proud he was recently to be given – by the long-retired civil servant Max Nicholson, who worked for his grandfather Herbert Morrison – a faded photograph of the then deputy prime minister helping the first Indian high commissioner to raise the new flag that momentous August day exactly 50 years ago. There is a burst of warmly spontaneous applause.

It's difficult, at least just now, to imagine an encounter with Fleet Street and the mainstream TV networks passing off quite as amicably as this one. Mandelson is weary annoyed with the latest offence: a story apparently written by a *Times* diarist who lives two doors down from him in Notting Hill, and has taken the trouble to spot that his car tax disc has run out. But this is trivial compared with a fortnight of relentless headlines depicting him as arch manipulator of the news, Rasputin, self-

appointed acting Prime Minister and goodness knows what else. Mandelson has become the story.

About the reasons for this, he is emphatically clear: "The Tories say it. The BBC run with it and the newspapers run with it and report it as fact. Whatever it is, Mandelson's taking over; Mandelson's a megalomaniac. Mandelson's doing this; Mandelson's doing that. It's all a way of diverting attention from what the Tories really fear, which is the Government's record, its effectiveness and its enduring popularity. They'd rather discuss anything other than that. If they can set me up as a whipping-boy, that's what they want to do."

He isn't even in the Cabinet, and yet has he not thrust himself into the limelight as the government's chief ministerial spokesman?

"I was appointed on 1 May as minister responsible for co-ordinating the presentation of government policy, in effect being the government spokesman. Instead of being, behind the scenes off the record, an 'in the dark' brief, I'm a spokesman. What is surprising or unusual about that? It becomes particularly exposed in August when so many other ministers are away. Normally, departmental issues would be fronted by departmental ministers."

What's more, he says, the big media events of this month have been issues that have certainly affected the Government, but, by their very nature, aren't matters of departmental policy: the tragic suicide of the MP Gordon McMaster, the failure to win Uxbridge, the break-up of Robin Cook's marriage, Lord Simon's shares. "I was asked to carry on co-ordinating the Government's message during August. I've been doing it since May. But no one's commented about it or cared about it. It's just been there. But in August things which go completely unremarked for the rest of the year suddenly become stories. That is the definition of an August story."

So let's turn to the top item on the charge sheet, that he wound up the story on a Foreign



Office investigation into the leaking of information to Chris Patten's biographer Jonathan Dimbleby for the crude purpose of distracting attention from Robin Cook's marital break-up.

Not so, he says emphatically. That frantic Saturday, when it became clear that the *News of the World* was going to do the worst, after taking two surgeries in Hartlepool, Mandelson sped to Downing Street to co-ordinate every detail of the response with the Foreign Secretary, who himself was travelling down from Edinburgh. He didn't even know about the *Sunday Times* until the Saturday night, and though he absorbed its contents it was "pretty low down the pecking order" compared with the problems generated by the *News of the World*. It wasn't until the following day that, faced with demands for confirmation, Mandelson had himself briefed, and established that it was true.

John Sopel, the BBC duty political correspondent, had indeed been told by a Downing Street official that Mandelson would respond to a question on the Patten affair at the end of his *World this Weekend* interview on the Cook affair, which had been the easiest the most sensible way of dealing with it. But hadn't Sopel himself implied clearly the following day that he had been encouraged to pursue the story as a welcome distraction from the Cook story?

That wasn't the case, says Mandelson. He had been among those seeking confirmation of the story. What's more, that claim was a "piece of vanity broadcasting by John Sopel. My objection was that the Tories started personal attacks on me, as they always do. The BBC drove the agenda and the papers reported all of it as fact. There are as many macho BBC editors manipulating the news as there are party spin doctors. And as for some of the political correspondents, they are vying over each other in their ambition to take Robin Oakley's job. [Oakley is the BBC's political editor.] Hopefully Robin will be around for a long time."

Is it really in the Government's interest to attack BBC journalists in this way, or to have had his famous subsequent spat with the *World at One* presenter Martha Kearney? He hadn't attacked Martha Kearney – "read the transcript". But there had been an agreement that he would be questioned on the Government's record over its first 100 days. "Why should we

accept the BBC agenda, which is essentially about itself and its own preoccupation with itself and my role at the expense of the listeners' interest in the Government's record, their schools, their health service, the fight against crime, what we're doing about unemployment. You don't usually make converts when you take on a BBC interviewer, but my posting suggests the public likes politicians who stand up for themselves. Conservatives are outraged by my audacity. Labour people give three cheers that I stuck to my agenda."

Mandelson is palpably frustrated that the press ignores most of his activity. Mandelson says that while his August job is to "make sure Tony Blair enjoys his holiday in peace, and to be a lightning conductor". Luminaries of the seniority of Sir Robin Butler are already going round Whitehall saying what a good strategic job he is doing at the Cabinet Office. He himself says: "People just don't realise that about 20 per cent of my day is spent on press matters, and 30 per cent on the co-ordination of government business and strategic policy work." In normal times, "when I leave the 9am meeting each day [on government presentation, chaired by Mandelson], managing the press is in the hands of Alastair Campbell [Downing Street press secretary and, like the PM, on holiday] and his team. I often don't visit the subject again until the next day. I am involved in the detail of committee work and what the Cabinet Office does in knitting together what the Government is doing."

Some of this activity will surface dramatically today, when Mandelson devotes much of his Fabian Lecture to the topic of social exclusion, and the Prime Minister's orders for a new Cabinet unit, reporting directly to him, to redeem Labour's pre-election pledge to make Britain a less divided society. Mandelson's use of today's lecture to show that Labour is indeed sensitive to exclusion of the poor – or, as politicians prefer not to call it, the underclass – is an important marker for the Government. But it matters to him personally, too, as a candidate for election to the National Executive of the Labour Party.

Why be standing, when surely be already

has all the power he can handle? First, because he thinks the NEC should be a proper executive body which takes a real grip of the party's administration and money, more than it does. "I think having attended the NEC's meetings for 10 years as a senior party official, I do know something about how the party could be made more professional." But, secondly, because he believes: "The misgivings that some people have of me is of having seemingly unaccountable power, that I'm put in a position of influence, of leader's patronage, and have a clout and wield power which is wholly dependent on the leader and is not accountable to anything or anyone else in the party. I sympathise with that view. I'm not standing for the NEC because I want to distance myself from Tony Blair, or necessarily because I want to establish greater independence from Tony Blair – but because I want to be recognised by the party for what I am and what I do, in my own right. And for the party to feel that having put me in position and elected me to it, that I'm accountable to them as a result."

While Blair hasn't declared his hand, Mandelson remains firmly in favour of electoral reform – though to the alternative vote system which Liberal Democrats view as an unworthy substitute for true PR. On Tam Dalyell's steadfast opposition to Labour's devolution plans – including a remark that Mandelson's claim that it will underpin the union is "silly" – he says, sensibly: "You'll never silence Tam. And in a party which is as strong as confident as ours, you shouldn't try to do so." But he insists that once the referendums are over, and assuming they produce a "yes" vote, "then I would expect Labour MPs to respect that mandate and act and vote accordingly in the House of Commons."

Will it not then be a grim setback for his political career if he fails to be elected to the NEC? No, he says, a "disappointment". Not many Labour politicians, particularly those below Cabinet rank, make it to the NEC on the first attempt. And, no, despite all the suggestions that he should be given a Cabinet job with all dispatch, he will not speculate on the subject. There are no early reshuffles in sight, and he is very happy doing his current job, thanks very much.

If nothing else, today's Fabian lecture should present a more rounded Mandelson than the pantomime villain image of the last fortnight.

Mandelson
I'm not
standing for
the NEC
because I
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myself from
Tony Blair...
but
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party for
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and what I
do, in
my own right'

Photograph:
Tony
Buckingham

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Rita, high priestess (special rates for Royals)

On Monday, as sweltering afternoon turned to warm evening in the small Derbyshire village of Lower Pilsley, local woman Tina Cave noticed a thrumming sound in the sky overhead. Looking up, she spotted a helicopter circling above the trees. For 10 minutes, she said later, it flew low over the village, as though trying to locate the right house. Finally the helicopter landed in a field, normally a paddock grazed by several horses.

The arrival of the green and cream chopper occasioned great interest among local children. Especially when word got around that its occupants were none other than Dodi Fayed and Dodi Wales. Young Emma Radford, 11, told the *Daily Mirror* that: "When we spotted the helicopter we ran off as quickly as we could to get a camera." Described as a "Mirror reader", Emma showed her fitness for the description by taking a photograph of incredible fuzziness – although she stopped short of doctoring it. Mind you she is only 11, and there is still time.

The loving couple had

dropped out of the sky to spend 90 minutes in the company of Rita Rogers, an unremarkable-looking woman in her mid-thirties. Ms Rogers is a discreet psychic whose card reads: "Rita Rogers, Medium. Private sittings and phone readings". We must suppose that she can put you in touch with the dear departed either in the flesh, so to speak, or via a BT connection. Conceivably, she manages some ectoplasmic video-conferencing. Anyway, Ms Rogers' charges are reasonable: ordinary folk pay £35 per hour, and the Princess of Wales has seances for free.

Rita, who is writing a book entitled *From One World To Another*, emphatically denies that she is other than the real thing. "I am not a fake," she protests. "My job is like being a priestess." Those who study world religions and their history might wonder what is meant by this last claim. Priestesses could be considered a mixed bunch, from the live baby-burners of Baal to the temple whores of Tanit. We must wait for the book to discover which Ms Rogers has in mind, for she is not speaking at the moment.

The Princess was put on to Rita by none other than the Duchess of York, who – we are told – "turned to the psychic for advice after separating from Prince Andrew". Fergie was consoled by the prediction that she was not destined to remain alone, but that she would marry a US president. How the dead know these things is beyond me, but I suppose it is one of the few perks that the poor wretches enjoy. Certainly Fergie and Bill would make an interesting couple, what

with all that wonking. Since this introduction, Diana has, apparently, used Rita Rogers to try and contact her deceased father. But why did she visit Lower Pilsley yesterday, taking poor old Dodi with her? Was it, as one newspaper speculated, because she is "keen to know what the future holds for their romance"? I would lay odds that – if this were the case – old Rita didn't tell the pair that they were poison together. Or perhaps Diana generously wished to help her lover get in touch with his own grandmother, a woman who died in her early fifties, according to a "face lift" which went tragically wrong". Presumably the face was lifted much too far, leaving the restless ghost to wander howling round Harley Street surgeries, with the modern-day equivalent of holding her head under her arm.

Should we worry? Royalty historically has a penchant for such figures. The Tsarina Alexandra had Rasputin, and if Prince Yousouff had not poisoned, shot, stabbed and drowned old Rassars, maybe Grigori junior would have been available for our

modern female royals. Harrods helicopters would have swooped down on his bawd-cum-bordello just outside Orel, so that much chastising, mortification and other necessary treatments could have been applied. Instead, today's princesses and duchesses have had to make do with Madame Yass and the blue pyramid, with Simone Simmons, who saw a "vast black whirlwind of energy" on the side of Diana's bed where a partner might sleep (a description that does not quite fit the essentially docile Dod), with astrologers galore, therapists of all hues and – of course – fortnightly colonic irrigation. It's a bum deal.

But then, we all get what we deserve, don't we? True of Di, true of us. If we sit open-gobbed in front of the *Paranormal World of Paul McKenna*, think crop circles are not made by idiots with tractors, mistake night choppers for UFOs and bother to learn precisely nothing about the world around us, then how can we complain about princesses who like to talk to the dead?

Miles Kington is on holiday



**David
Aaronovitch**

Hawks

It's the end of winter here in Sydney. The snow-ploughs have been churning up the Pacific Highway for days, the sand-gutters are out in force, rudimentary snowmen line the suburban gardens of Paddington, the cab drivers all wear mittens, tyre-chains are mandatory for anyone venturing off the motorway, and ... No, I'm afraid I can't keep this up. It is winter in Australia, but - much as you might wish them the kind of freeze-your-nuts-off winter that Britons fly to Oz in December to escape from - there's little sign of it. The sky is a kingfisher blue, long, ironed-out clouds line the horizon of Sydney Harbour purely (it seems) to produce more interesting sunsets, and everything sparkles like mad in the morning - the result, according to Thackeray, of keeping a section of ocean cooped up in a bay.

Bondi Beach is lined with industrial skips full of litter, though many of the cardboard boxes seem to be empty wine crates. A stiff breeze whips across the wide sand, to where two blonde babes in shimmering PVC are being filmed with a brace of dolish lifeguards for some vapid sitcom. At Surf's Up, one of umpteen T-shirt shops on Campbell Parade, the owner, Jim Nicholson, stands in front of a two-har electric fire ("Christ, it's bloody freezin' in here") and inveighs against the changing local population. "Bondi used to be full of heroin and losers. People didn't like to admit they lived here. Then Fox studios opened down the road, and the place was crawling with film producers and movie stars. Now it's full of glamorous hangers-on, and your roach-infested two-bedroom apartment's worth half a mill." He scratches his head at the oddness of social evolution. "Believe me, mate - it used to be heroin, now it's cocaine, only the addicts are prettier."

Everyone in town talks about food, and a week-long acquaintance with Oz cuisine leaves you flabbergasted. They devour eccentric, shy things, such as blue-eyed cod and "mud crab" and sardines - the last a bizarrely popular choice. Otherwise, the menu is ablaze with invention and eccentricity ("steamed kumquat pudding")?

The only odd thing is the ubiquity of the letters BYO at every restaurant entrance, suggesting Bring Your Own wine, though nobody can explain why.

The locals are friendly, if insulting. In the first three days, I've been called a *worm warr*, a *dag* (it means, since you ask, something that dangles from a sheep's bottom), a *rat-bag* and a suspect *wooster*, and that was just by the womenfolk. Attempts at gallantry are best avoided. I told one of beauty that she should visit Italy some time, where her every venture out of doors would be greeted by cries of "*Che stupenda figura!*". "If I knew what that meant," she said crossly, "I'd slap your face ..."

I spent the weekend up the east coast at Byron Bay, the most spectacular sandy beach I have ever scampered down, into freezing shallows and deafening waves. Everyone tries, with foolhardy intrepidity, to surf on these Homeric funnels, these terrifying Hokusaï curls, these tidal monstrosities, these gigantic crashing spirals pointing to a watery grave. The Beach Boys wouldn't stand an earthly. Only the bravest, the toughest Oz musclemen could possibly survive them. To heave an idle afternoon, I watched the surf heroes arrive on the beach: the fat rooie with long black ringlets and fussy posing pouch; the three laughing blond luminous, complete with abbreviated surfboards (had they shrunk in the cold water, along with everything else?); the



john
walsh

'Believe me mate, Bondi Beach used to be full of heroin ... now it's cocaine, only the addicts are prettier'

Under the stern gaze of Queen Victoria, whose imperious sulky statue looms over Macquarie Street, an atavistic impulse drew me through the doors of Hyde Park Barracks. This small, three-storey prison was the first colonial nick to the convicts (deported from England and Ireland) who were otherwise roaming the streets of Sydney like prairie dogs. Today you look at the compact little building and think: 600 men, crammed in here. But what was the impulse that drew me inside? I prowled around the rooms, inspecting the sad lives of convict children, and the silken ironies of convict-ship logs ("Some of the women require more patience than faith to the lot of infamy humanity," observed the Matron's diary on the good ship *David Melville* in 1858). At the top, one room was filled with about 80 hammocks slung like bodies from wooden beams, inches apart. Next door was a roll-call from the 1823 census, which named all 600-odd men in the barracks and where they came from. I counted three John Walshes: a Dublin butcher (age 19, seven years for robbery), a Limerick farm labourer (age 24, seven years for *insurrection*) and a soldier from Kent (age 45, seven years for "breach of trust"). Appalled to find the family escutcheon so comprehensively besmirched, I lay down on one of the hammocks. There was barely room for a small child. The room's concealed loudspeakers whispered the details of who'd been sentenced to 25 lashes who'd been given 50 ...

I closed my eyes. A dozen family spooks came crowding in on my jet-lagged brain, flesh-torn, stunted and miserable. I was out of there like a bat out of hell.

deliciously thin Japanese girl in skin-tight rubber suit, then the scrappy hippies with henna-ed hair and huge boots and sickly expressions ...

Hang on a second. What are they doing here? These, gentle reader, are the "ferals" (as everyone calls them, to rhyme with "perils") and Byron Bay has become their natural habitat. In 1974, there was an epic *Age Of Aquarius* gathering in the region, and thousands of middle-class hippies trekked up from Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. Many have stayed ever since. They camp on the hillside. They pick up dolce cheques from the DSS office in a converted Masonic lodge. In consequence, Byron Bay is now the centre of the Australian backpacking universe. The main street is foggy with patchouli. You can buy rum here (they take Visa or MasterCard), investigate "aura-chakra" readings or sign up for a course in didgeridoo sonic therapy. It's Glastonbury meets Eastbourne. Given the number of beach-culture addicts who flock to the place, you get some odd conjurations: the "Crystal Temple" of aids to spiritual enlightenment is located next door to the "Mad Dog" surfie emporium.

In the evening, drinking at "the Rais", aka the Railway Hotel, a packed crowd of hairies, whale-fanciers, surfers, crystal-gazers and apparently unbothered middle-class locals watched a Levellers-style hand playing whimsy Celtic jigs. I asked the owner, Tom Mooney, a burly businessman who owns half the town, why he didn't mind their presence. "Nah, we love the ferals," he growled.

"They're our guarantee the town won't turn into every other bloody town. It's the franchise outfit we dread. Any time some guy from, I dunno, Benetton comes near the town, we hung a couple of ferals in the main street and see how fast they change their minds ... So there we have it: the New Age Traveller as commercial scarecrow.

So there we have it: the New

Age Traveller as commercial scarecrow.

The Chicago experiment derived from a realisation that many pupils were leaving school without even the bare essentials to be employable. True, the city had a special problem; by the early 1990s, the flight of the white middle class to the suburbs had left the city's schools with an overwhelming majority of children from poor, mainly ethnic "minority" homes. Some 54 per cent of today's pupils are black; another 30 per cent Hispanic.

But when a new mayor, Richard Daley - son of the long-serving mayor-honour of Chicago, "Joe" Daley - was elected in 1995, he pledged to re-vamp the city's education. Too many people, he said, had written off the pupils as doomed to fail. It was the schools that were failing, and the city was failing the schools.

Whatever is said about Mayor Daley, and much of it even from political opponents is positive, he has fulfilled his promise to shake up the schools. Seven are being "reconstituted" - with a new head and all staff required to re-apply for their jobs. One in five of the city's 550 schools are "on probation": they are being monitored, lamented and largely disregarded. The pupils went automatically into the next grade, and lagged further and further behind.

Last year, for the first time, eighth-graders (14-year-olds) who did not reach the standard set by the city were not allowed to go on to high school (the four-year school leading to a diploma). They had to go to special summer classes to try to repeat the school year at speed.

They use special course materials, chosen for "relevance" and soundness, comprising a mix of original work and "rote" learning that would please both

long-delayed repairs and refurbishment. Of five schools I visited, four were in the midst of extensive works. Perhaps the biggest undertaking, however, is the city's determination to improve standards, above all the pupils' test scores. Chicago pupils, along with most US children, take national tests of basic skills - reading and mathematics - at crucial points in their school careers. In the past, the scores were recorded, lamented and largely disregarded. The pupils went automatically into the next grade, and lagged further and further behind.

At the end of this academic year, the programme, known as the "Summer Bridge", became compulsory not just for failed eighth-graders, but for three other year groups, older and younger. In all, more than 10 per cent of the city's 420,000 pupils were required to attend the special seven-week programme, and in some schools the number exceeded 50 per cent.

Staffed by selected teachers, all experienced and well-regarded (and paid for the additional "term"), the summer programme does not attempt to repeat the school year at speed.

They use special course materials, chosen for "relevance" and soundness, comprising a mix of original work and "rote" learning that would please both

the "learn by doing" and the "back to basics" tendencies.

Officials at the city's education department stress that the reform is not just about improving test scores or Chicago's position in the national scale. It is mainly about pupils and equipping them for the world beyond school. It is also an attempt to break with two decades of rampant "grade inflation", when teachers felt under pressure to pass every child, regardless of achievement, and the "social" benefits of keeping children in their year group were thought to outweigh individual educational achievement.

It is too early to judge the results of the reforms, but first indications are good. Test scores in the last academic year were

by Mary Dejevsky



Beset by appalling results from its schools, the Windy City has adopted radical techniques which are attracting international attention

the best this decade. Karen Morris, head at a predominantly Hispanic school in the south of the city, said that there had been a clear change in pupils' attitudes once they understood that they would be kept down if they failed. They were, she said, "much more focused this year".

An education official responsible for overseeing the summer programme also noted one of the by-products of the back-to-basics approach and said he favoured much more of it. If a parent comes in complaining that his or her child has failed and that is unfair for whatever reason, he said, "I can call in the child and ask him, 'What is six times seven?' or whatever, and if he can't answer, I can tell the parent, 'You see, he doesn't know his times tables.' Without that requirement for specific knowledge the parent could say the child was just a poor test-taker or felt unwell on the day.

There are dissenters from the new approach. Some were involved with previous attempts to improve education in Chicago. They complain that the present administration is actually reaping a harvest that was sown by previous reformers and say that the roller-coaster of the past decade has damaged teachers' morale and confused parents and pupils.

Some dissenters, however, are now converts. Sitting in his cramped un-air-conditioned office, with the fan on full blast, one head of year said he was already seeing the benefits in pupils' attitude and achievement. And sometimes it is the small things that count. The provision of brand-new textbooks and calculators for this year's compulsory summer courses, in sufficient numbers for each pupil to have their own, was itself a morale-booster for teachers and pupils, said Angela Murdoch, director of one of the problem-ridden school in northern Chicago. They were so used to being at the bottom of the pile.

This week, Chicago's compulsory summer pupils will have been awaiting their results with as much trepidation as Britain's A-level candidates. Whether the compulsory summer programme element of the Chicago school reform would transfer to Britain, however, is another matter. How many parents, or children, would forego their holidays to spend another seven weeks at school? In Chicago, every teacher told me, this was the least of their problems: as one put it: "There's not a lot of people here going to Florida."

Hawks and doves in the Lightning Club

What's it like to be on the receiving end of other people's ethics? The train was full of jolly holidaymakers bound for Blackpool but I alighted at Preston and took a taxi for the 11 miles to Warton. With the geography, the politics changed too. Mention the Warton factory in most parts of the country and you raise a question of moral ambiguity. But not in Preston.

Warton is where British Aerospace makes Hawk jets for Indonesia. It was here last year that four women smashed up one of the planes with a hammer but were acquitted on charges of criminal damage after pleading that they had acted to prevent it being used in the campaign of genocide which they said Indonesia was waging on East Timor.

I did not even try to get into the factory with its heavily guarded barriers and hefty security procedures. "The company long ago took the decision to say nothing and keep its head down," said Frank Coulton, who chairs the plant's union co-ordinating committee, as he met me in the foyer. Frank, by contrast, is fed up and happy to go public.

We set out for the plant's sports and social centre. The Lightning Club, which was so full of funtimes boozers that it seemed like stepping into a bygone era when Britain made things and the men who made them drank beer. It is, for all that, a community under siege. Hawk exports to Indonesia may have escaped a whipping in Foreign Secretary Cook's "ethical foreign policy" review. But the workers of Warton can be excused for wondering, for how long?

"The thing about these protestors is that they don't give up," said

Frank. "There's only a handful of them but they seem to wield real influence." And that is oot all. "They seemed to have some inside information. They went direct to the aircraft which was ready for Indonesia, and it was not in there," he said, indicating the massive white hangar behind the club. "That's the usual place, but it was in the test-flight hangar which is miles away."

In the wrecked cockpit they left a video cassette of what they believed were Hawks attacking villages in East Timor. "We sat down with the management and studied it. You see glimpses of aircraft we have since identified as US Star fighters. It then cuts to scenes of mass panic at a massacre in a cemetery as to suggest it was the planes which caused it."

BAE then checked with its training staff attached to the Indonesian air force. They said that the Hawks were based out of range of Timor and that the maintenance logs were incompatible with missions there.

"And, let's face it," said Frank, "if you bought a £15m plane, armed with missiles that cost £10,000 each, would you use it to set fire to mud-walled villages when all you need to do is send in the local militia?"

The three explanations each sounded plausible. But in the back of my mind I had the aphorism of an old schoolmaster who once admonished: "Only ever offer one justification for an action, Valley; more than one sounds like an excuse."

But Frank was insistent. "There's no doubt Indonesia is oppressing East Timor. But putting people out of work here isn't going to solve the problem. Everybody is trying to make us the baddies. We're getting

A JOURNEY AROUND THE WHOLE ISLAND OF GREAT BRITAIN



WITH
PAUL VALLEY

kicked to death every week in the media - and you can sense that the pressure and frustration has started to build. When people are out socially they now find they are having to defend themselves."

After lunch I wandered around the trim, prosperous village on the edge of the plant which injects £2m in disposable income into the local economy every week. It employs 10,500 people - the majority engineering graduates with average earnings of over £20,000 a year.

It must have been half-day closing in Warton as the post office, the art gallery and the fitted kitchen shop were all shut. In the neat parish churchyard the name and phone number of the minister had been inscribed on a freshly painted board. Since it is the church which is at the forefront of the anti-Hawk protests, I decided to ring the vicar and plumb his definition of a moral dilemma. But it was evidently half-day for doves too, for there was no reply.

I ambled back to the Lightning Club where the first after-work drinkers were appearing. "The parish priest doesn't mention it at all except in the context of traffic disruption," said one of the drinkers. "He's certainly not always saying, 'Let's say a prayer for the people of East Timor,'" he added, a touch acerbically.

His name was Jim. "Don't print my surname," he said. You could see why. "There are no morals in this trade," he went on. "It's a case of supply and demand; morals go out of the window if you have a potential sale. As for these protestors, they don't give a stuff about the people of East Timor - if it wasn't this they'd be protesting about some other idiotic cause. I live in this village and life in East Timor saved."

I resent all these scruff. The Great Unwashed is what we call them."

The eyes of the rest of his fellow drinkers - a metallurgist, a calibration engineer, and a health and safety expert - turned heavenwards. They had each set out a nuanced position, acknowledging the difficulties, then building on each other's arguments. The nation has to defend itself. We have to export to defer costs, said Brian. Without the Indonesian sales there would be no profits for R&D on things such as the European fighter, said Eddie. We need jobs for our kids and if we destroy the only manufacturing industry left in the country, where will be, asked Jan.

But for Jim, an ex-navy officer whose job was to train customers' air forces, that was not enough. He rolled chilling phrases round his mouth like a fine wine. "We make weapons which are designed to kill large numbers of people extremely efficiently." "We aim to maim, not kill." "I help in the manufacture of a military aircraft which can be used to suppress civilians - but it keeps me in a job and pays my mortgage."

Brian groaned and left before Jim got round to advancing the theory that the protestors were probably funded by one of BAE's competitors. "It's the kind of thing the French would do."

Not long after, the US government announced that it had decided to cease selling F16 fighters to Indonesia. The Russians stepped straight in to supply an alternative. I thought of Frank Coulton, and telephoned him to see what he had to say. "That's the point," he said. "Five hundred jobs lost and not one life in East Timor saved."

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OF THE YEAR

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DEPUTY BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: MICHAEL HARRISON

Jobless total falls to 17-year low as rates take breather

Tom Stevenson
Financial Editor

Interest rates have paused but not yet peaked, economists predicted yesterday as the Bank of England admitted there was still a risk that it would overshoot its inflation target two years from now. That fear increased yesterday after a sharp fall in the jobless rate to its lowest level for 17 years.

The City's caution, which led to a 72.2-point drop in share prices, came despite labour market data suggesting the economy had entered a golden period where inflation and earnings growth remained stable despite strong economic growth and a falling unemployment rate.

In its Quarterly Inflation Report, its first since being set free to determine monetary policy, the Bank of England said the cost of living would fall over the next year but admitted it would be on a rising trend at the end of its two-year forecasting horizon.

Mervyn King, the Bank's economics director and a deputy-governor designate, said there was a greater probability that inflation would be higher than its 2.5 per cent target than lower on the basis of current rates.

But the Inflation Report restated the Bank's belief that monetary policy had reached a position where it could stand back for a while to "assess the direction in which the inflation risks are likely to materialise".

The inflationary risks from the consumer boom were underlined by official figures earlier this week showing a rise in the headline rate of inflation to 3.3 per cent, although the rise was driven by higher mortgage rates and excuse duty increases in the Budget. Excluding those factors, the underlying rise in the cost of living was static.

The argument that the British economy was enjoying a virtuous cycle of strong growth coupled with low inflation was boosted by labour market figures yesterday showing an unexpectedly large fall in the

jobless rate but flat earnings growth. Just under 50,000 returned to the workforce in July, taking the unemployment rate to 1.55 million, its lowest level for almost 17 years.

The fall in the unemployment rate took the percentage of the workforce without a job to 5.5 per cent, down from 5.7 per cent in June. That was the lowest percentage since April 1990.

David Coleman, an economist at CIBC Wood Gundy, said: "Although there may be some uncertainty about the seasonal adjustment, a monthly fall in unemployment of almost 50,000 is impressive by any standards. There is still reason to be cautious, however. Some slowing in the pace of fall in unemployment will be needed if the risk of bottlenecks and skill shortages is to be avoided."

Despite that concern, wage pressures showed no signs of increasing last month, with average earnings growth holding steady at 4.25 per cent. Economists said the figures added weight to the idea - increasingly

fashionable in the US - that structural changes in the labour market over the past decade had significantly reduced the rate of unemployment consistent with a take-off in wage growth.

Jonathan Loyson, UK economist at HSBC Markets, said: "These figures provide a further hint that the UK is enjoying a US-style combination of strong activity, low unemployment, and subdued wage growth."

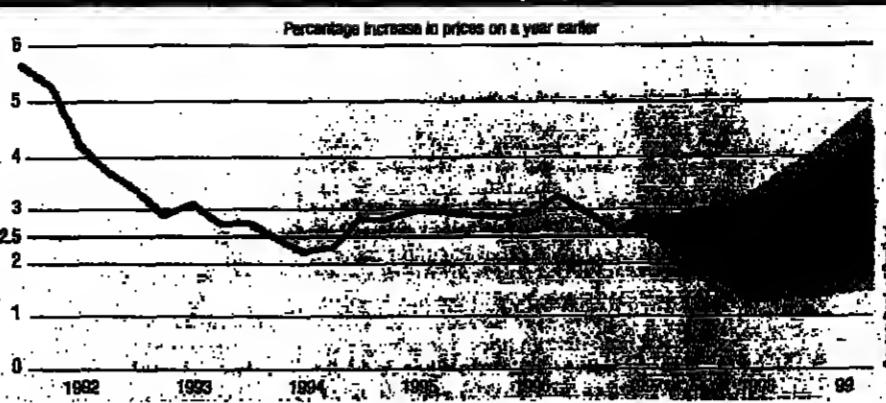
He warned, however, that the Bank's monetary policy committee would remain concerned that unemployment could not continue to fall at the current rate without wage pressures eventually emerging.

Another analysis said: "The key point the Bank made when it raised interest rates after the last meeting was that a peak had been reached. The market knows now that interest rates have not reached a peak."

Mr King said it was difficult to know how long the pause in interest rate movements would be. "I cannot anticipate when the pause will be," he said.

Current RPIX inflation projection

Percentage increase to prices on a year earlier



Concerns over sterling kept rate rise down

The Bank of England considered imposing a half-point increase in base rates at the July meeting of its Monetary Policy Committee, but settled for a quarter-point rise to keep a lid on the soaring pound, writes Tom Stevenson. Minutes of the meeting, published yesterday, showed how the MPC struggled to balance the need to restrain consumer spending with a desire to keep the rise of sterling in check.

The harshness of the policy dilemma emerged as the policy fell sharply against the German mark again yesterday, held back by the Bank's apparent conviction that interest rates do not need to rise in the short term and by a rising belief in Germany that base rates there are about to increase.

The pound fell by more than 4 pence yesterday to under DM2.50, shrugging off strong labour market data that showed an unexpectedly large fall in the unemployment rate which might normally be expected to put upward pressure on interest rates. The jobless number was mitigated by average earnings numbers showing subdued wage pressures.

Minutes of the MPC's July meeting showed that the committee had considered whether a larger interest rate rise might create uncertainty about the future direction of rates which might put less upward pressure on the exchange rate. It concluded, however, that a half-point rise might actually lead to economists factoring in a higher peak to the interest rate

cycle and an unnecessary appreciation of sterling.

The relative attraction of the mark was heightened yesterday by a hawkish assessment of German inflation by the Bundesbank. In its monthly report, the German central bank said inflation had picked up and warned it would steer policy to ensure price stability. The movement in exchange rates confirmed the view that the rise of sterling in recent months has had more to do with the weakness of the German currency than its own inherent strength. The mark also appreciated by around 3 pence against the dollar yesterday following US producer price data showing a seventh successive month of declining prices.

Warburg helps SBC profits rise 84%

SBC Warburg, the London-based investment banking arm of Switzerland's third-largest bank, helped power its parent, SBC, to an 84 per cent increase in profits for the first half of 1997. The booming investment banking arm became the biggest profit earner of SBC's four main businesses, with profits up 60 per cent to SFr691m (£288m).

SBC made SFr1.326bn in the first half and said it expected full-year profits to comfortably exceed SFr1.7bn, though it saw earnings growth slowing in the second half. While the Basel-based bank is the smallest of the Swiss 'big three', it is now seen by many analysts as the best.

"This is an excellent result and compares well with the other Swiss banks," said Carlo Capaul, a fund manager at Van Vende Portfolio Management.

"If the financial markets rise further, companies like SBC will continue to profit."

The results were interpreted yesterday as good news for London as a global financial centre, as well as confirmation that SBC did a good deal when it bought the ailing SG Warburg two years ago for £890m.

At that time a comment by Warburg's chairman, Sir David Scholey, that the two companies fitted "like the chunk of a Rolls-Royce door" drew widespread scepticism.

Following a failed merger attempt with Morgan Stanley, the UK's largest investment bank was in crisis. Now Warburg's powerful securities side has benefited hugely from the huge new distribution channels it has access to via SBC's global banking operations.

"SBC Warburg keeps growing, enabling Swiss Bank to fulfil its ambition to be a global investment bank," said James Alexander, an analyst at Dresdner Kleinwort Benson.

Sceptics pointed yesterday to soaring financial markets around the world this year, and questioned whether SBC Warburg's growth was sustainable. The Swiss Market Index rose 46 per cent this year with indexes in Germany up 48 per cent and the UK up 22 per cent. The Dow Jones Industrial Average is up 23.4 per cent.

Commission income for SBC Warburg's securities operations surged with these rising markets and was the main reason for the first-half profit gain.

This year SBC Warburg bought American investment bank Dillon Read for \$600m. Last month it announced a joint venture with Brunswick Investment, one of Russia's largest securities firms, and another joint venture with Long-Term Credit Bank of Japan.

Last week, SBC Warburg was named the most successful mergers adviser on cross-border transactions in Europe for the first half of the year by *Acquisitions Monthly* magazine, beating American rivals such as Morgan Stanley Dean Witter Discovery and Goldman Sachs.

RBS on hunt after £630m Midshires buy

Nic Cicutt
Personal Finance Editor

Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) yesterday signalled that it is prepared to consider more building society takeovers as it confirmed its acquisition of Birmingham Midshires, the fifth-largest remaining society, for up to £630m.

The takeover could result in a cash payout of £600 or free RBS shares to Midshires' 1 million-plus members which include up to 300,000 so-called "carpetbaggers".

Dr George Mathewson, group chief executive at RBS, said the takeover of Wolverhampton-based Midshires would virtually double the RBS residential mortgage book and increase its retail savings balances by 75 per cent.

"If there came along a very substantial deal on the same basis [as this], I do not think that anyone would say no to it. I do not know anyone who would say anything different," he added.

However, Jeremy Batstone, head of research at NatWest Stockbrokers, said: "RBS has traditionally been seen as the prey rather than the predator,

although this appears not to be a hostile takeover. But Midshires is not big enough an acquisition to prevent RBS from still being seen as a potential target."

Birmingham Midshires, which has a residential mortgage book of about £7bn, has about 1.1 million savers and 150,000 borrowers serviced through 115 branches. RBS, which operates through 660 branches, has slightly more savers and less borrowers. It also has 1.7 million current account holders and the bank's total assets stand at almost £70bn.

The takeover had been widely anticipated since the society resolutely refused to rule the option out 18 months ago, at the time of flotation announcements by Woolwich, Northern Rock and Alliance & Leicester building societies.

Mr Batstone said: "It has been an open secret that [Midshires] was looking for a partner and has been everyone's favourite to be 'carpetbagged'. It is yet another nail in the coffin for mutuals despite the recent Nationwide vote. The rest of the building societies are swimming against a tide which is coming in fast."

Mike Jackson, chief executive at Birmingham Midshires, said that the two organisations had come together only nine months ago, after a long-running review of the society's options concluded that a takeover by another institution made most sense.

"I think George [Mathewson] picked up the phone about a

week before I did, but we had also concluded that RBS was the one we should be talking to," Mr Jackson added.

Although Midshires' mortgage processing centre in Bracknell, Berkshire, will close Mr Jackson pledged there will be no compulsory redundancies among staff. Midshires would continue to run as a separate

business, and its brand identity and branch network had been guaranteed for three years.

The takeover would allow for considerable cross-distribution of each organisation's services and financial products, which he said was needed by members of his society.

Mr Jackson denied that continual rumours about Mid-

shires' intentions had led to "carpetbagging" on a mass scale, thereby diluting the value of any free payout to longer-term members. He said the new accounts had increased the value of Midshires to RBS and allowed for even greater cross-selling opportunities.

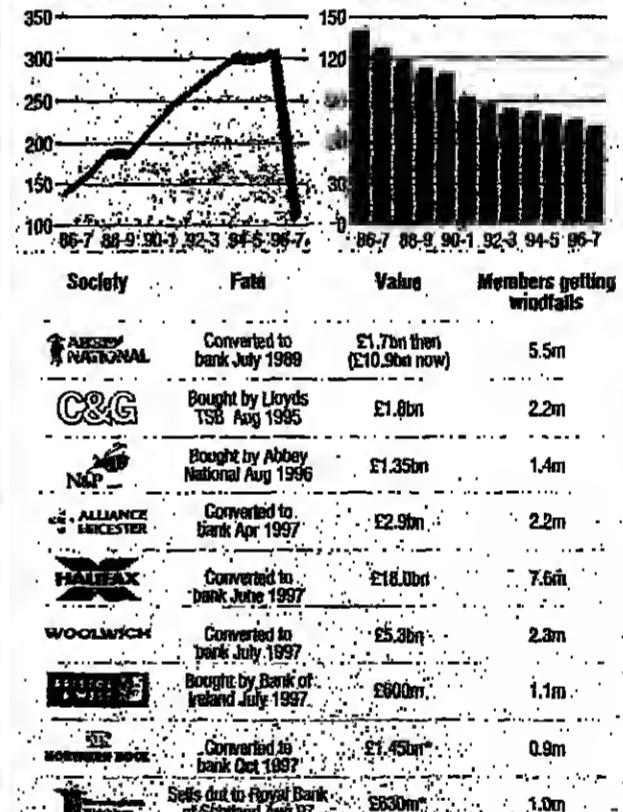
RBS said it was pricing the deal at a price/earnings ratio of

12 when the society is finally taken over next year. The deal will be financed by issuing new shares, which are to be taken up entirely by Scottish Widows, the Edinburgh mutual life insurer, lifting its stake in RBS to about 4.7 per cent.

RBS already collaborates with Scottish Widows over telephone sales of personal pensions.

Building Societies

Building society assets (£bn) Number of active societies



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COMMENT

'Conventional wisdom says that when labour markets tighten, pay packets go up, fuelling consumption and hence inflation. The latest figures would suggest, however, that Britain may at last have broken the link.'

Scenario A: Unemployment at its lowest since 1980. Inflation in check. Average earnings on a plateau. Government borrowing under control. House prices flat. Consumer confidence at a seven-year high. Output growing at a healthy but sustainable 3 per cent. What a list. What an economy. Goodbye boom and bust, welcome to the virtuous circle.

Scenario B: An overvalued exchange rate. Windfall gains fuelling a high street spending binge. Company receivables running at 1989 levels. A bull market about to run out of steam. R-Reg mania. Oh dear. Better get the holiday to France in now. Recession around the corner.

Yesterday's unemployment figures, showing a 50,000 drop in the jobless total in July, were better than anyone had a right to expect. What made them even more impressive was our publication alongside figures showing an absence of any inflationary wage pressures with the rise in average earnings stuck firmly on a plateau.

Conventional wisdom says that when labour markets tighten, pay packets go up, fuelling consumption and hence inflation. The latest figures would suggest, however, that Britain may at last have broken the link with the help of its flexible labour markets created by the reforms of the last 15 years.

They are certainly happy around at the Bank of England following last week's quarter point rise in interest rates. The Bank's latest Inflation Report pronounces

itself satisfied that the Government's 2.5 per cent inflation target is now in range without the need for further fiscal tightening.

In truth, the picture is less clear and arguably less benign than that. As the Bank itself concedes, the risks to its central projection of inflation lie more on the upside than the downside, suggesting that further rate rises will be necessary.

In the markets it is a mixed bag. The foreign exchanges seem to have bought the line for now that sterling is no longer a one-way bet. But the equity markets seem less persuaded that the inflationary tiger has been tamed judging by the way the Footsie is nudging back down around the 5,000 mark.

Meanwhile the unemployment totals have been massaged so many times that comparisons spread over 17 years start to become meaningless. There have been twice that number of changes in the way the figures are calculated in that time.

It may be too premature to start talking up a recession. But it is equally far too early to conclude that the boom/bust cycle is a relic of the past.

Midshires whets the carpetbaggers' appetite

And then there were 71. Birmingham Midshires' capitulation to the Royal Bank of Scotland means that the building

society movement has now shrunk in number by a half in little more than 10 years. It looks like becoming slimmer still since the carnivorous appetites of the RBS will not stop here.

Nationwide's valiant refusal to convert to a bank begins to look like the last twitch from the dying body of mutualism. But perhaps all is not lost.

Birmingham Midshires has been walking about with its skirt around its waist for two years trying to tempt some passing bank. In the process it has sucked in 300,000 carpetbaggers more interested in getting a bung than a building society from their deposits. Yesterday they struck gold and never mind the thousands of ordinary savers who will see the wealth created over several generations frittered away in another windfall.

The blutant manner in which the society was fastened up for conversion contrasts starkly with the explanations trotted out yesterday by its chief executive Mike Jackson as to why mutualism is being forsaken.

All that Birmingham Midshires had done was listen to its members and conclude that they deserved a wider range of services than a building society could offer. Apparently its 1.2 million members find it a chore having to open separate bank accounts and buy life assurance elsewhere.

Never mind, they will get their £700 bung and Mr Jackson will get a plum job with the

parent company if he wants it along with the chairmanship of the society.

What next? Well, there are a whole raft of middling building societies a great deal more wedded to mutualism than Birmingham Midshires who could be next in line, starting with the Britannia, the Norwich and Peterborough, the Bradford and Bingley and the Portman.

The last of these could make a particularly tasty second helping for the RBS since the Portman would neatly fill the geographic hole still missing from the jigsaw once Birmingham Midshires has been turned their noses up at such pickings.

It is no surprise to hear privatised utilities squeal when a regulator turns the screw on their earnings. But given that electricity supply only accounts for 7 per cent of bills, it looks as they may have a point this time. The answer, of course, is for RECs to merge their supply operations, leaving separate companies responsible only for the distribution monopolies. Discussions between RECs are taking place, but this creates a whole new can of competition worms.

If the professor is really determined to bring down electricity bills he should launch a full-scale review of the generation market, which has now been freed from price regulation. Instead he has approached the issue by the back door in the supply price control proposals, suggesting that generation costs will fall, without saying how. The messy approach has left the RECs and generators fighting with the professor and with each other. The sooner we have a complete review of electricity prices, in all their complex guises, the better.

Time-bomb is ticking for Littlechild

As the clock ticks down to domestic electricity competition next year Professor Stephen Littlechild looks increasingly like he is sitting on a time-bomb. He is already at loggerheads with the companies over how much of the cost of introducing competition they can pass on to customers. The professor says less than £400m, the industry wants

August car sales on track for new record

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Sales of "R" registration new cars soared by 18 per cent in the first 10 days of this month, putting the industry on target for a record-breaking August sales of well over 500,000.

The internal industry figures, seen to car companies yesterday by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, showed 208,000 registrations were recorded in the 10-day period, well ahead of even the most optimistic industry expectations. The figures are seen as a clear guide for the whole of August because so many cars are ordered by customers before the start of the month.

Car industry analysts were last night raising their forecasts for this year's August bonanza and predicted sales above the previous August peak of 500,112 in 1989. Some bullish manufacturers had already privately forecast 520,000 registrations this month, but some analysts suggested they could reach 550,000. It could also push sales this year to more than 2.1 million, though they would still be some way off the 2.3 million peak in the boom year of 1989.

Other forecasters were more cautious, pointing to the fact that August this year includes one less selling day than in 1996. Another factor was the trend for customers to "pre-order" cars before the start of the month, which could see sales in the remaining 20 days tail off more sharply.

Last year August was a disappointing month for the industry, with a modest increase in sales to 479,407. Dealers

blamed the lack of interest from private buyers, though this year demand has apparently been boosted by building society windfalls and buoyant economic confidence.

But yesterday's figures painted a gloomier picture for "traditional" market leaders such as Ford, which saw its market share plunge to 16 per cent in the first 10 days. It followed a disastrous July for the US giant, which took less than 12 per cent of the British market, one of its lowest figures for decades.

Ford has this year cut incentives to dealers and has retreated from offering big discounts to customers. The company had forecast a modest August this year of less than 495,000 registrations, but has been apparently caught out by demand for other makes.

In contrast, Renault, the French group which has seen its sales surge this year on the back of new model ranges, has gained 7.1 per cent of the market in the first 10 days. Analysts predicted that imports could take a higher share of the market, possibly matching the 70 per cent recorded in July.

Separately, industry sources yesterday warned that the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders was having trouble processing the registration data, blaming the unexpectedly strong demand and a new computer link which connected some manufacturers.

The new computer system is understood to have temporarily failed on the first day of this month. The SMMT has previously denied speculation of problems with its data-processing systems.

Granada chief to take on ITV programmes role



Richard Eyre, the incoming chief executive of ITV, yesterday made his first management appointment at Network Centre, giving David Liddiment (above), managing director of Granada's UK broadcasting division, the role of director of programmes, writes Cathy Newman.

The appointment ends months of speculation that Mr Liddiment would take the position, in effect replacing Marcus Plantin, the outgoing network director.

Mr Liddiment, who is to start the new job at the same time as Mr Eyre at the end of September, said last night: "My job is to make sure we pick the right shows

and schedule them as effectively as possible." He and Mr Eyre are to preside over an increasingly centralised ITV, which in recent months has seen rapid consolidation into the hands of the three players - Granada Group, Carlton Communications and United News & Media.

Mr Liddiment has been in his present role at Granada since last year. Previously, he has been deputy managing director of LWT and head of the BBC's entertainment group. At Granada he was executive producer of Coronation Street for five years.

ITV programme budget lacking

Cathy Newman

ITV needs to boost its spending on programmes dramatically to avoid losing viewers to Channel 5 and satellite and cable television, according to new research from Merrill Lynch.

Channel 5 has eaten into ITV's audience share as the network has failed to increase its programming expenditure sufficiently, figures from the investment house show.

ITV, which increased its pro-

gramme budget by just 3 per cent to £602m for 1996/97, saw its audience share dwindle between April and July from 34.4 per cent last year to 31.6 per cent this year.

Channel 4, which grew its spending on programmes by 16 per cent to £510m this year, increased its audience share from 10.6 per cent last year to 10.7 per cent this year despite the launch of another rival, Channel 5, in the spring.

The Merrill research con-

Hollick rules out cable merger

Cathy Newman

The cable industry was dealt a fresh blow yesterday after it emerged United News & Media, Lord Hollick's media conglomerate, had ruled out joining merger talks with cable operators Telewest and NTL. Separately, NTL also announced a large restructuring which will mean the loss of 50 jobs.

United had been courted by NTL's head, Barclay Knapp, as part of a plan to merge with Telewest to create a rival to Cable & Wireless Communications, the UK's largest cable company. However, a source close to United said yesterday: "United never had any intention of joining the talks."

City observers said United's presence in the merger would have given the consolidated group greater clout, and would have added impetus to the rationalisation of the industry.

NTL, which announced its second-quarter results this morning, said it was merging its three customer operations departments into one over the next six months. Its Fleet office will also be absorbed into offices in Farnborough and Guildford.

A spokeswoman for NTL said last night that upwards of £1m would be saved by the job cuts and reorganisation of the business. She added that further cost cuts and redundancies could not be ruled out, and that some of the 50 redundancies announced yesterday would be senior positions.

The news comes just one week after Telewest, the second biggest UK cable company, said it was to slash 1,400 jobs, a quarter of its workforce. The company also said it would slow down its investment spending and would inject more funds into marketing.

The cable industry has come under fire from the City in recent months as the number of customers signed up has failed to increase as fast as anticipated.

IN BRIEF

Fire damages Eurotunnel's turnover

Last year's fire in the Channel Tunnel hit Eurotunnel's turnover in the first half of this year, according to figures released by the debt-laden group yesterday. In the six months to the end of June turnover fell from £223.6m to £168.8m, though the group said compensation received from insurance companies for the fire damage added £52.4m to revenues. Sales in the second quarter rose to £93.3m from £75.5m in the first three months. The Anglo-French group is in the final stages of renegotiating its £9bn debt burden with the banks following shareholders' approval of the scheme, which replaces bank debt with equity, at an acrimonious extraordinary meeting in Paris last month. Freight services resumed through the tunnel on 15 June after a seven-month break. Eurotunnel recently said traffic figures on the tourist shuttle service were back to pre-fire levels, although the total cross-channel market had expanded by some 15 per cent since last year.

Water companies agree compensation

Six more water companies had agreed to offer compensation payments to customers whose supplies were interrupted under drought orders, though nine companies had still to accept the plan, the industry watchdog Ofwat, said yesterday. The latest groups to offer schemes include Anglian, Southern, Northumbrian, Severn Trent and Thames, with the changes having take effect from 8 August. In April, 14 companies agreed to compensate customers, including South West, North West, Wessex and Welsh Water. Domestic customers can claim £10 for each day or part of the day that the supply of water is interrupted, up to a maximum equivalent to the water company's average annual household bill. For business customers the compensation is £50 a day. Southern Water and Yorkshire Water have yet to agree to compensation schemes.

Richards uncovers £530,000 black hole

Richards, the textiles group, has unearthed a black hole of £530,000 at its Towerton home furnishings subsidiary. The company also warned that the continued strength of sterling, particularly against the Belgian franc, was virtually stopping European exports and it was inevitable the group would post a loss for the year to 30 September. The Towerton loss was concealed by misleading accounting information supplied by the subsidiary, partly due to inadequate control systems. The company has restated its six months to March results to show a loss before tax of £350,000, compared with a previously reported profit.

Institute calls for pension costs review

The Faculty and Institute of Actuaries has called on the Government to make sure all statutory assessments of pension costs are reviewed following the removal of tax credits from pension schemes. Duncan Ferguson, Institute president, said: "Commentators have suggested this Budget will be neutral for long-term savings. The case is unproven and this Budget will immediately reduce the income stream."

Highbury House warns of losses

Highbury House Communications, the publishing group, said trading in the first half of the year had been below expectations and it would make a higher-than-anticipated loss. The company said the disappointing performance had been due to continuing losses at its Trustcare division and a poor first quarter's trading in the original Highbury House publishing business.

Securicor and BT take £40m provision

Securicor and British Telecommunications are taking a combined £40m charge this year after a supplier abandoned a project to create a new billing system. BT said it would take a £24m provision and Securicor a £16m provision after the supplier, AMS Management Systems UK, abandoned a contract to create a computerised billing system for Celnet, a UK mobile phone network owned 40 per cent by Securicor and 60 per cent by BT. The news is a further setback for Celnet, which trails its three UK mobile phone network competitors in new sales. It will also be a blow to Securicor, which saw its first-half pre-tax profit fall 7 per cent as a result of increased competition for Celnet and development costs at Intel, its US mobile phone operator.

Ockham profits fall to £7.4m

Ockham Holdings remained on the look-out for things to buy, particularly in specialist retail insurance, said chairman Allen Thomas as the company announced a fall in pre-tax profits for the six months to June to £7.4m from £11.4m last time. Highway contributed managing agency profit commission totalling £2.3m against £2.8m. Wise Speke produced a profit before tax of £1.5m. This compares with £1.5m in the first half of last year.

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Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

The Bank of England announced yesterday it is to commission a special report on the effect of windfall payments from building societies, as two more companies announced soaring sales boosted by de-mutualisation spending.

Mervyn King, deputy governor of the Bank of England, said the bank estimated the total windfalls to be worth £36bn and that its report on the economic effects should be completed "in a month or so".

The comments came as Airtours, Britain's second largest tour operator, said a combination of the building society windfalls and increased buying power of sterling had boosted its summer bookings both for 1997 and 1998.

Separately, Rosebys, the furnishings group credited the windfall factor for soaring sales of beds in the five weeks from 30 June sales at its Benson Beds subsidiary were 40 per

cent up on a like-for-like basis.

Tim Byrne, Airtours' deputy finance director, said: "There can be no doubt that £36bn of cash sloshing around the economy must have had an effect, although it's very difficult to measure."

Harry Coe, Airtours' deputy chief executive, expressed caution on the windfall factor, saying: "We would be somewhat surprised if we didn't get some of that money but it is difficult for me to say how much of our increased bookings are being made for that reason."

Rosebys' chief executive, Mike Rosenblatt, said the dramatic increase in sales was not sustainable and that the recent spate of interest rate rises would start to dampen growth. "I think towards the end of the year those interest rate rises will start to make themselves felt and that will take the edge off the boom that we are currently enjoying."

Airtours' third-quarter results to the end of June showed a 24 per cent increase in profits to £24m. Summer 1997

business

Struggling BICC ripe for demerger

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY SAMEENA AHMAD

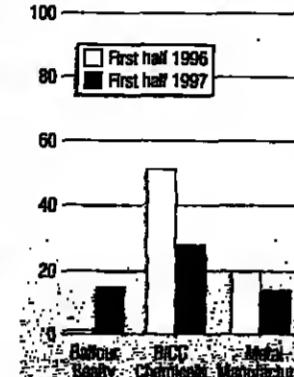
BICC: At a glance

Market value: £820m, share price 162.5p (-7.5p)

Trading record	1994	1995	1996	1996	1997
	Full year			Half year	
Turnover (£m)	3.97	4.38	4.87	2.37	2.22
Pre-tax profits (£m)	131	(67)	64	(2)	55
Earnings per share (p)	19.2	(38.3)	(9.2)	(0.3)	4.6
Dividends per share (p)	14.28	12.22	12.41	3.91	4.0

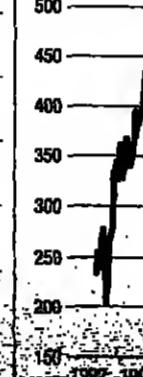
BICC divisions

Operating profit before exceptional (£m)



Share price

pence



BICC is in a mess. Both of its two core businesses, power cables and construction, are inherently unattractive. Despite reasonable market positions, price competition from rivals and falling demand ahead of utility privatisations is squeezing already wafer-thin margins. Investors have had a rotten deal. A rights issue at 270p a share in September - BICC's shares, down 7.5p are now 162.5p - was swiftly followed in May by a profits warning. And Alan Jones, new broom chief executive, has failed to be radical enough to satisfy the City.

Since his appointment in 1995, BICC's shares have underperformed the market by 70 per cent. BICC's problems are evidenced in yesterday's half-year figures. Underlying profits for the six months to June fell 13 per cent to £55m on turnover 6 per cent down. Though better contract picking helped Balfour Beatty, BICC's construction arm, improve profits from £1m to £15m, the European power cables business was dire. Cables profits almost halved to £28m, hit by reduced infrastructure spending ahead of monetary union, falling demand in the key Italian market ahead of the telecoms privatisation and competition in Germany.

What's more, on NatWest Securities forecasts of 11.3p earnings in the full year, BICC is heading for yet another uncovered dividend on a likely maintained 12.4p full-year payout. Though BICC has cash, an uncovered dividend never looks good. The group should cut its dividend again, but that would take guts after the rights issue.

So what should Mr Jones do? After more than two years as chief executive, surely it is time for something brave. The planned chop of 350 jobs in Italy hardly fits that bill. More interesting is the suggestion that something is afoot in German cable.

Though Mr Jones says nothing more than the German business is to "reposition", and that with 39 per cent gearing, the balance sheet is not constrained, observers reckon BICC is about to cuddle up to one of its big power cable competitors - such as Siemens of Germany or Alcatel Alsthom of France.

What is likely is a limited joint venture in Germany. But if BICC really wants to help itself, it needs a big, pan-European deal. Such a joint venture with, say, Siemens would allow BICC to reap huge economies of scale, close loss-making plants and give it access to Siemens' strong brand, distribution and marketing.

But that alone is not enough. To fully realise value, BICC needs to demerge the construction business. Mr Jones' argument that the group needs the cash of cable to strike good construction deals is weak. What a demerger would do, by motivating management and improving performance, is expose Balfour to a potential bidder. But even excluding bid

speculation, NatWest believes the group's break-up value alone would be 100p above the present value at 260p a share, even after stripping out debt and convertible preference shares. There is potential in BICC, but to realise it will take bold steps.

Copthorne's rates have room to grow

The hotels sector has been under a cloud recently due to the City's concerns over growth in capacity and the effects of the strong pound on overseas visitor levels to London.

But while these reservations have hit shares, the operators themselves have stayed jolly about prospects. Stakis reported good figures last month and yesterday Millennium & Copthorne did the same.

The 24-strong hotel group, which has proved to be one of the best of last year's crop of new issues, enjoyed a 53 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to £19.9m in the six months to June. On a pro forma basis, which as-

sumes the group owned its New York hotels for the whole of the previous year, operating profits rose 37 per cent to £27.3m.

The figures are particularly impressive as they include £1m of closure costs for the Commodore hotel in Paris, which will undergo a nine-month revamp.

So far Copthorne seems to be shrugging off the worries of the sector's doomsayers.

Finance director David Cook says that as 75 per cent of its customers are business travellers, the strength of the pound has a limited effect. And 60 per cent of visitors to its London hotels come from the UK.

Copthorne disagrees with reports that suggest an additional 10,000 beds are coming on stream in the UK over the next few years and says most of the additional capacity will be in the peripheral areas of London rather than in the centre of the capital.

Occupancy on a pro forma basis increased by 3 percentage points to a healthy 76.9 per cent, which provides limited headroom. But the upside is that the group is able to increase room rates, with the average rising by 5 per cent to £80.70.

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With like-for-like sales growth of more than 40 per cent, Games Workshop can certainly justify the plans.

House broker Credit Lyonnais Laing forecasts £13m profits next year. On a forward PE ratio of 22 next year, falling to 18 times, the shares are still good value.

Expect more rate hikes and some selective acquisitions from the new managing director, John O'Shea.

On upgraded forecasts of 248.5m for the full year, the shares trade on a forward rating of 15.

At 378.5p, up 10p yesterday and a full 100p on the 278p issue price last April, the shares are worth a look.

War games are a serious business

Forget the moonies and Freemasons. Fantasy war games are the cult of the Nineties - especially for all those boys out there who have never quite grown up.

Tom Kirby, chief executive and soon-to-be chairman of Games Workshop, is one such chap.

Founder of the highly successful games company, he shuns grown-up City clothes for jeans and T-shirts and talks excitedly about the new Gorkamorka game where green-skinned miniature monsters with long tusks do battle riding around bugies.

Unlike conventional toy companies such as Bluebird, which struggle to keep pace with the passing whims of fickle children, Games Workshop's toys - miniature fantasy collectables - are a serious hobby for dedicated enthusiasts.

Three-quarters of buyers are males over 12 years and, of those, a quarter are adults.

In fact, the Games Workshop business is more akin to a razor-and-blade company such as Gillette.

For every £50 an average devotee spends on the basic games kit - a board, a few miniatures and a rulebook - he will spend another £50 over the next two years building up the collection. What's more, the appeal seems to cross cultural barriers.

Yesterday's full-year numbers to June - profits rose 26 per cent to £11m after a £5m currency hit, leaving the shares 6.5p higher at 575p - showed rapid expansion in continental Europe, now more than a third of the total, particularly Germany and Spain. Business has also been growing quickly Australia.

Japan, with its tradition of often-violent fantasy "manga" comics, should be an ideal war games market.

Meanwhile there is plenty still to do in the UK. Mr Kirby says there is room to add another 100 shops here, doubling UK capacity.

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With like-for-like sales growth of

sport

Johnson is made to struggle

Athletics

MIKE ROWBOTTOM

reports from Zurich

Michael Johnson, who brashed a *Superman* outfit after retaining his world 400 metres title last week, looked as if he had been affected by Kryptonite last night as he struggled to hold off the challenge of seven more mortals.

The double Olympic champion, rocking with the effort in the final 10 metres, recorded a time of 44.31sec nearly a second slower than his best, to hold off his American rival Trece Washington who recorded 44.38sec.

Davis Kamoga, of Uganda, the world's silver medallist was third in 44.43, with Britain's Roger Black, making his first individual appearance since returning from the virus infection which denied him an individual place in Athens fourth in 45.07 sec.

The crowd chanted Johnson's name afterwards, but for all his broad smiles it was a faintly desperate performance which underlined doubts about whether he has fully recovered from the injury that caused him to miss the US trials.

Colin Jackson, a surprise silver medallist at last week's

World Championships, was unable to close the gap here on the man who beat him in Athens, Allen Johnson. The American won the Weltklasse Meeting 110m hurdles in 13.13sec, with Jackson back in fourth in a time of 13.30sec.

Tony Furtado, who went out in the World Championship heats, gave a better indication of his ability this time around by taking third place in 13.21, with Mark Crear finishing 0.01 behind his American compatriot.

The race was preceded by a B version, in which Roger Kingdom, the 34-year-old American who set a world record of 12.92sec nine years ago, won in 13.36. He is one of a long line of athletes who have responded positively to the combination here of financial incentives and intense spectator appreciation.

The meeting, with its annual budget of £2.5m, has the financial clout to make it virtually obligatory for the world's leading athletes.

Merlene Ottey, a particular favourite, raised the noise level still further in the 100m as she held off the woman who beat her in Athens, Marion Jones, and her US colleague, Gail Devers, the Olympic champion, to win in 10.96 sec.



Brooke Bennett, of the United States, powers her way to victory in the 800m freestyle at the Pan Pacific Championships in Fukuoka, Japan, yesterday

Photograph: Reuter

Such ado as lott and Croft face inquiries

Cricket

DEREK PRINGLE

reports from Chelmsford

Glamorgan 301-8

Essex 303-9

Essex win by one wicket

rounder and yesterday's man of the match in the home side's thrilling one-wicket victory.

"The incidents that have gone on in this match are part and parcel of the game back home," Law said yesterday. Speaking about the Croft/lott argy-bargy (which culminated in no more than a shove) he said:

"We see it as two players expressing different opinions in the heat of the moment. They are not condoned, but as long as you don't see two blocks slugging it out, we tend to let them get on with it."

Unsurprisingly, it was not a view taken by the England and Wales Cricket Board [ECB]. In a statement from Gerard Elias, the QC who is chairman of the ECB's discipline committee, the board have asked the two counties to carry out inquiries.

"Both sides were desperate to do so," Elias said. "And will hopefully issue a result by the end of the week."

With Elias vice-chairman of Glamorgan, that seems to imply some fairly tough action and both players can probably look forward to a fine in the region of £1,000.

In a week in which England lost the Ashes to Australia, there have been several disputes over first-class cricket's lack of spine, not least by Nasser Hussain, whose column this week, in a national newspaper, described the county game as "All matey and lovey dovey."

However, speaking yesterday, as acting captain of Essex, Hussain felt that the tie with Glamorgan was one of the hardest fought domestic cricket matches he had played in.

Predictably, reaction to the scuffle at the end when lott appealed against the light, has

been split between the hysterical (the tabloids) and those willing to shrug it off (the players).

The incident comes at a bad time for Lord MacLaurin's blueprint, particularly the highly supercharged one-day league, which will now be kept to all those who feel one-day cricket breeds obnoxious behaviour.

To make that league financially viable, MacLaurin is hoping to sell the league to television. However, television is what made the incident the ogre it never was, and what would have merely elicited an "Ooh" from the crowd in an untelevised match, has been replayed until its proportions grew heads.

As lott pointed out after the match, particularly to the scuffle at the end when lott appealed against the light, has

achieved in the competition's 34-year history.

Warwickshire will not be easily deprived of a fourth trip to Lord's in five years. They demonstrated as much yesterday after their opponents won the toss and chose to bowl but had to wait 29 overs to make a breakthrough after Neil Smith and Andy Moles put on 130 for the first wicket.

It was a brave effort by Moles, who batted with the aid of painkillers and a reinforced glove because of damage to a finger, and it was hardly surprising that his 30-year-old partner

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Indeed, the first ball in each of three spells contributing to 10-overs figures of 0-76 went for four.

Smith fell to Rajesh Rao's catch on the cover boundary, after which Moles reached 56 off 109 balls before he was leg before to Venet Drakes. For the most part Sussex bowled respectably well, especially Mark Robinson, who deserved a wicket or two to enhance his economy.

But Warwickshire were full of runs, inconvenienced neither by two long stoppages – of three hours and one hour after a delayed start – nor by anything in the conditions.

Hemp combined with Dominic Oster (58) in an marvellous partnership of 142 in 22 over for the third wicket, joining the assault on Jarvis in reaching a half-century in 54 balls, then surviving an amazing sequence in which he was dropped twice on 54 and again on 60 before accelerating to 111 off 93 balls, with sixes off Jarvis, Keith Greenfield and three in one over off Amer Ali Khan.

Keith Greenfield and three in

one over off Amer Ali Khan.

Allan Donald will receive

South Africa's highest sporting honour, the gold medal, from Nelson Mandela in the Presidential awards in Pretoria tomorrow.

Sri Lankans allow opportunity to slip

TONY COZIER

reports from Colombo

Sri Lanka 332 and 457-7

India 375 and 281-5

Match drawn

Neither team could find the resources to achieve victory on the final day and Sri Lanka and India had to be content with yet another draw in the second and final Test here yesterday.

Peter Such, Essex's No 11, strode to the crease. The previous evening Such had joked that if he got to the middle he would either be a chump or a chimp. With the help of one of Graham Gooch's old 5lb bats and a low full toss, it was the latter, as Thomas's fifth ball was sent scuttling for four, and Essex were back at Lord's.

They were put out of the reckoning with the loss of two wickets before lunch and a slow run-rate, and lost all interest within 10 minutes of the second session when their captain, Sachin Tendulkar, fell to an uncharacteristic stroke that resulted in a skied catch after he had made only eight.

Reiffel returns home

England's hopes of claiming a consolation final Test victory at The Oval next week were lifted by both Paul Reiffel and Jason Gillespie being ruled out for the remainder of the summer.

Having already sealed the series at Trent Bridge last week, Australia have little option but to play Michael Kasprowicz and Brendon Julian. Reiffel, brought in for the injured Andy Bichel, has returned home because of

At that stage the Sri Lankans were in with a realistic chance of a rare Test triumph, but were let down by their catching and gained only two more wickets in the day. They were held up by Mohammad Azharuddin for the last three and three-quarter hours to be unbroken on 108, his 19th Test hundred and his second in successive matches. Yet they missed two chances to do so of his early on.

He was 12 when off-spinner Mutiah Muralitharan, who had already accounted for Rahul Dravid and Tendulkar, put down a low two-handed return. At 40, in the penultimate over before tea with the match still alive, wicketkeeper Ramesh Kantharana let an edge off Sanath Jayasuriya's left-arm spin fall to the ground.

Before Azharuddin, only Ajay Jadeja played with confidence for 73 before silencing to gully off Sajewwa de Silva, but then Sanav Ganguly joined Azharuddin in an unbroken stand of 110.

Hemp helps Warwickshire to take command

JON CULLEY

reports from Edgbaston

Warwickshire 342-3

v Sussex 23-2 (after 8 overs)

The second NatWest Trophy final followed the first in becoming a two-day affair after rain hampered progress here yesterday. It will need rather more than the 11 balls bowled at Chelmsford yesterday to obtain a result when the contest resumes this morning.

It will also need a record-breaking performance if Sussex,

who began the season in turmoil after losing half a team and a whole committee, are to become the most unlikely of finalists after an unbeaten century by the former Glamorgan left-hander David Hemp helped Warwickshire to a formidable total of 342 for 3 in 60 overs.

Sussex have chased runs with notable success in reaching the last four but will surely find the task they face here too much, needing to eclipse two more than the 329 they managed to beat Derbyshire at Derby in the quarter-final, a higher winning total than any side batting second has

achieved in the competition's 34-year history.

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CRICKET SCOREBOARD

NatWest Trophy

Semi-finals

Essex v Glamorgan	Semi-finals
CHELMSFORD: Essex beat Glamorgan by one wicket.	
Essex won toss	
GLAMORGAN 302-8 (50 overs; S P James 109, P A Costa 50).	
(Overnight: 268 for 8, 53.1 overs)	
T P Hedges b Shaw & Thomas	2
M C Both not out	1
P M Such not out	2
Extras (4) b Shaw & Thomas	22
Total (for 8, 50 overs)	308
Fall: 1-150, 2-194, 3-195, 4-256, 5-280, 6-285, 7-295, 8-299.	
Drakes 150, Hedges 12-0-48-5; Costa 12-0-47-5; Croft 12-0-39-1; Date 3-0-21-0.	
Bowler: 1-150, 2-194, 3-195, 4-256, 5-280, 6-285, 7-295, 8-299.	
Umpires: R J Richardson and D J Corcoran.	

Warwickshire v Sussex	Semi-finals
EDGBASTON: Warwickshire have made 90 for 9 wickets closed. Today: 10.30.	
Sussex won toss	
WARRICKSHIRE	
A J Moles lbw b Drakes	58
*N M Smith c Rao b K Newell	72
D L Hemp not out	111
D P Oster b Drakes	58
T L Penney not out	25
Extras (109, 2 wickets)	20
Total (99, 2 wickets)	342
Fall: 1-230, 2-302, 3-302.	
Did not bat: D S Brown, G Welsh, A Giles, K Newell, R J Richardson, S P James, P A Costa, D J Corcoran.	
Bowling: Drakes 12-5-38-2; Jarvis 10-0-76-2; Penney 10-0-76-2; Oster 10-0-54-2; Moles 8-0-49-2; Greenfield 8-0-54-2.	
SUSSEX: C W J Athey, K Greenfield, R K Rao, K Newell, P W Taylor, M Newell, T P Moore, V C Drakes, P W Jarvis, A A Khan, M A Ramzan.	
Umpires: J H Hampshire and K E Palmer.	

Second Test	**Sri Lanka v India**

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Swedes make Rangers suffer

Football

KEN GAUNT
IFK Gothenburg
Rangers

obtaining plenty of possession. Durie was left holding his head in disbelief when he missed a glorious chance, sending his close-range shot wide when it would have been easier to square the ball to Negri in the middle.

Gothenburg were beginning to look uncomfortable under the weight of Rangers' attacks and they hastily cleared the ball for a corner after Tony Vidmar had picked out Alex Cleland.

Cleland was booked for tripping Robert Andersson, and then Rangers were almost caught napping two minutes before the break when Stefan Petersson broke clear, only to hook his shot over.

That was a warning for what was to follow in the second half when Rangers were hit by two goals from the Swedish champions in the space of three minutes. The veteran Petersson put Gothenburg ahead after 55 minutes, with the visitors guilty of some shoddy defending. Robert Andersson played the ball back to Petersson and he rattled in a shot that thundered past Andy Goram, the Rangers' goalkeeper.

Rangers were still getting their thoughts together when the Swedes added a second in the 58th minute. Goram made a valiant attempt to prevent Par Karlsson's shot going over the line from an acute angle, but the referee, Vitor Pereira, ruled that the goal should stand.

Rangers were still reeling from that double blow when they could have gone 3-0 behind on the hour. Goram spilled a shot from Andersson and the ball appeared to trickle over the line – but luckily for Rangers the referee ruled in their favour. The worried visiting manager, Walter Smith, made a double substitution after 65 minutes, bringing off Negri and Albertz and replacing them with Ally McCoist and Ian Ferguson.

Gothenburg were buoyant after going two goals ahead and again almost grabbed a third when Karlsson found himself clear in the area, only to knock his shot over the top. The third goal arrived two minutes from the end, though, when Peter Eriksson, a substitute, com-plicated the scoring.

IFK Gothenburg: Ravelli; Johnson, Ernmark, Luck, Magnusson, Andersson, Petersson, Kihlman, Karlsson, Andersson. Substitutes: Jansson, Henricsson, Eriksson, Martensson, Teter, Ekstrom, Svensson.

Rangers: Vidmar; Cleland, Stenzen, Ponn, Rendall, Goram; Negri, Albertz, Durie, Vidmar; Stenzen, Goram, Ferguson, McCloskey, Moore, Miller, Gunnarsson, Arndsen.

Referee: V Pereira (Portugal).

Rangers have a lot to do if they are to reach the promised land of the Champions' League. Despite having the better of the first half, they ended up well beaten by IFK Gothenburg in last night's European Cup preliminary round first-leg match at the Ullevi Stadium.

Despite the absence of their inspirational captain Brian Laudrup, who has chicken pox, the Scottish champions took the game to the home side and carved out a number of good chances. Jörg Albertz cut through the Gothenburg defence after nine minutes only to steer his shot wide, then Gordon Durie shot just wide after Stale Stensæs had set him up with a fine cross.

Rangers continued to make the running in the early stages and Thomas Ravelli was forced to race from his goal and head the ball clear, losing his cap in the process as Jonas Thern tried to find Marco Negri.

Rangers continued to dominate and must have gone in at half-time in good spirits after

Blackburn lead the chase for Kennedy

Blackburn Rovers are likely to lead the chase for the Liverpool winger Mark Kennedy, who put in a transfer request earlier this week.

The 21-year-old Duhlinger has spent two years at Anfield without becoming a first-team regular. If Liverpool agree to let Kennedy go, Rovers can be expected to bid for his services.

They can certainly afford him, having raised £13m by selling seven players since Roy Hodgson's arrival – £10m in the last week. Kennedy, who cost £1.5m when he arrived from Millwall, is expected to cost around £2m if Liverpool decide to let him go. Blackburn may face opposition from Wimbl頓, who tried to sign Kennedy in the summer, and may renew their interest.

Arsenal's Patrick Vieira and Matthew Upson have been suspended for three matches after the Football Association received official notification of their dismissals against PSV Eindhoven in a pre-season friendly in the Netherlands on 30 July.

The bans start on 25 August, which means they will miss Arsenal's north London derby

with Tottenham five days later and the next two matches. However, Vieira may still escape suspension after the FA agreed to forward video evidence to their Dutch counterparts.

Arsenal produced film of the match believing Vieira was unfairly treated, and the FA spokesman, Steve Double, said: "We have forwarded it to the Dutch FA, who can now show it to the referee and ask him if he thought he made a mistake. If he says he was wrong, Vieira's ban will be lifted."

Tony Adams pulled out of a reserve game yesterday because he was still suffering from a rib injury, but Arsène Wenger, the Arsenal manager, said Adams should still be available for Arsenal's game at Southampton on 23 August, but it will be at least another month, however, before Martin Keown is fit to return.

Premier League officials have arranged to meet their leading continental counterparts on 10 September to discuss problems with fixture congestion, but a League spokesman yesterday insisted there were no plans to break away from Uefa, European football's governing body.

At 6ft 4in, he could prove to be a towering presence for the

team, with Tottenham five days later

if the West Ham manager Harry Redknapp decides he needs further reinforcements before the deal can go through.

The 29-year-old Danish defender was expected to make the switch from Upton Park to Parkhead before tomorrow's European signing deadline. With Redknapp securing David Unsworth from Everton on Tuesday in a swap deal with Danny Williamson, it appeared the way was clear to release Rieper – but the Hammers

hadn't told me anything."

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Woods at the double
Masters champion goes after his second major, page 21

sport

THURSDAY 14 AUGUST 1997 • THE INDEPENDENT

Hemp in command
Left-hander puts Warwickshire on course for final, page 22

England pair settle their differences the morning after the night before...



Glamorgan's Robert Croft (left) and Mark Ilott of Essex shake hands on the balcony at Chelmsford after Essex's one-wicket victory in the NatWest Trophy semi-final yesterday. The pair had clashed the previous evening when the players went off for bad light with Essex only six short of victory but with eight wickets down

Report, page 22; photograph, Mike Hewett

Barnes says sorry to unhappy Hammers

Football

John Barnes yesterday signed for Newcastle - and then apologised to West Ham for originally telling them he would move to Upton Park. Kenny Dalglish has signed the former England winger on a free transfer, just over 10 years since the then Anfield manager took him to Liverpool from Watford for £90,000.

Barnes, 33, has signed a two-year contract and will be available to play in the Champions League if Newcastle get through the qualifying round against Croatia Zagreb.

Barnes said: "I was very close

to joining West Ham. And before I heard of the interest from Newcastle I was virtually certain I was going to join them.

"But once I had heard of Newcastle coming in I explained the situation to Harry Redknapp. I wouldn't have liked to criticise him for his decision. Barnes said: "I felt for myself, for my family, for my piece of mind, I had not given myself the opportunity to talk with Newcastle and I explained this to Harry.

"As far as I am concerned and as far as Harry is concerned, who I have spoken too, it is not much of a problem. I don't believe Harry has gone public to criticise me. He is disappointed and rightly so, it has come out badly, but Harry and I are

whole thing, the way it was actually done."

Barnes was attracted by the chance of playing European football with Newcastle, and Redknapp has refused to criticise him for his decision. Barnes said: "I felt for myself, for my family, for my piece of mind, I had not given myself the opportunity to talk with Newcastle and I explained this to Harry.

"As far as I am concerned and as far as Harry is concerned, who I have spoken to, it is not much of a problem. I don't believe Harry has gone public to criticise me. He is disappointed and rightly so, it has come out badly, but Harry and I are

still friends as far as I'm concerned."

Barnes said he was delighted that Dalglish was giving him a chance at St James' Park, and insisted he can still play an important role for Newcastle. "Newcastle is a huge club, a big stage and I still believe I can perform at the very highest level," he said. "I believe I have still got a lot to offer Newcastle, or any club, but I wish to thank Newcastle for giving me the opportunity to continue my career at the highest level.

"I am coming to a club with a wonderful squad, I have much to offer but the Newcastle players here do also individually and

collectively. Kenny is an excellent manager - just look what he has done at both Liverpool and Blackburn - and hopefully what he is going to do here at Newcastle. Every club now needs a strong 18-man squad and this is the aim here. They have wonderful players here."

Barnes added he was not surprised by Newcastle's approach: "It didn't surprise me, I still have confidence in my own ability."

The transfer was announced in a statement to the Stock Exchange which said: "The Board of Newcastle United announces that John Barnes, who has been offered a free transfer by Liverpool Football Club, has

signed a two-year contract with Newcastle United. No transfer fee is payable to Liverpool."

The 73-times capped England player could make his debut in United's next Premiership fixture at home to Aston Villa on Saturday 23 August, before returning to Anfield with his new team-mates on Sunday 31 August.

The Hull City team-mates Gregor Rieoch and Neil Mann are to get a ticking-off to add to their yellow cards after squaring up angrily at one another in Tuesday's Coca-Cola Cup match at Macclesfield.

The pair, whose antics came on the same night as a similar,

better publicised push-and-shove on the cricket pitch at Chelmsford, are to get away with just an admonishment from Hull's new manager, Mark Hateley.

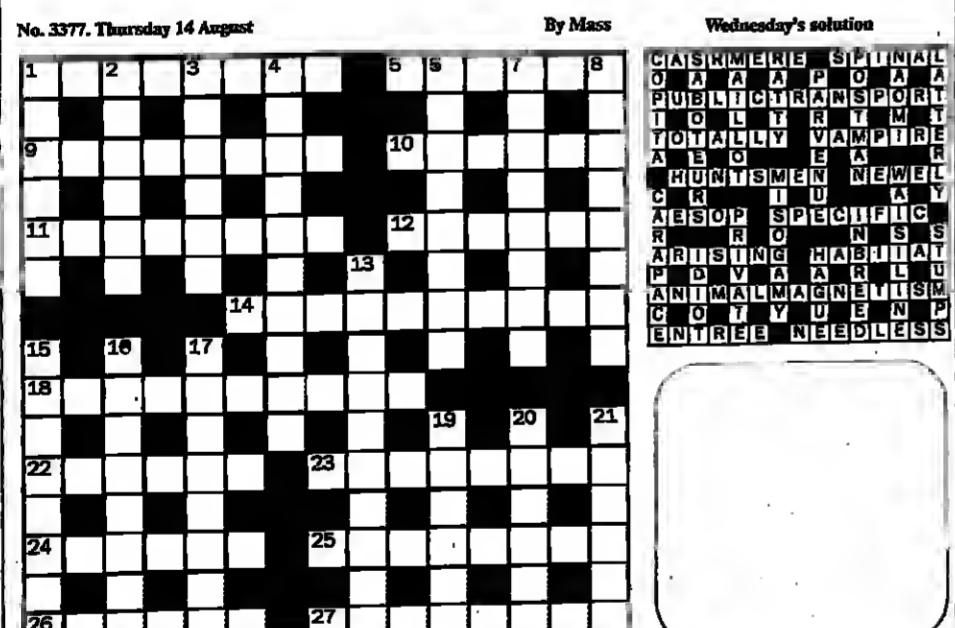
Hateley will not be too hard on his two players, even though they were both embarrassingly booked for the incident in the first-leg 0-0 draw. "I have decided that I won't be fining them for what happened," the former England international said. "In some ways it's nice to see that sort of spirit and commitment in the side. What I did was give them both a telling-off in the dressing room afterwards, and you can be sure it won't happen

again. But I think fines is going a bit too far."

The incident happened in the Hull penalty area when the pair fell out in a row about defending a cross. "The lads were both laughing about it when they came off, so there's no long-term problem - team spirit is clearly good," Hateley said.

Rieoch, 22, is the son of former Bolton and Arsenal manager Bruce - a fierce competitor himself in his playing days for Derby and Aston Villa - and 25-year-old Mann's father is the former Scottish player Arthur, who played for Manchester City, Notts County and Mansfield in the 1970s.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- Mount, second, lost lead (4,4)
- Is Henry absorbed by dance piece? (6)
- Cowboy feature picture about origin of Laramie (8)
- One gawping, beginning losing time (6)
- A capital character (8)
- Ruffle representative bound by policy (6)
- The type to harbour many a grouse? (10)
- Take that! (10)
- Grave's the end (6)
- Classifies British bats (8)
- Ornament (Oriental, we hear), quietly trendy (6)
- Free house around East, note (8)
- Took off after game, got moving (6)
- Musical partnership (without 'Cats') sparkles (8)
- Scrap with rasp round edges of diamond (6)
- Garden space for allotment was inaccurate, mostly (8)
- You'll need energy, it's said, moving miller's grinder (6-4)
- One running off after second athlete (8)
- Regarding lock as a defence (8)
- Light appearance of some iron, well-wrought (8)
- Mark of stress (6)
- Subtly balanced, artist's source of light (10)
- Busybody in time gets more insolent (8)

DOWN

- Gathered officer's full of merit (6)
- Swell party set up on base (6)
- Subtly balanced, artist's source of light (10)
- Busybody in time gets more insolent (8)
- Dance involving sailors with very good energy (8)
- Garden space for allotment was inaccurate, mostly (8)
- You'll need energy, it's said, moving miller's grinder (6-4)
- One running off after second athlete (8)
- Regarding lock as a defence (8)
- Light appearance of some iron, well-wrought (8)
- Mark of stress (6)
- Treat chappie with drink (6)
- Like birds in the trees (6)

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Sydney braced for blood testing

Olympic Games

Sydney's Olympic Games drugs chief is prepared for the possible introduction of blood testing in sport in time for 2000 but says followers of the Jehovah's Witness religion are providing the major hurdle.

Nicki Vance, the head of the Sydney Organising Committee, said his team would be prepared for any advances in drug testing but admitted that blood testing was an issue requiring a decision by the International Olympic Committee on moral rather than scientific grounds.

"There's been some research done and it appears from my reading that Jehovah's Witnesses may be the only group that have a problem with blood testing," Vance said yesterday.

"The Muslim religion apparently does not have a problem with it. That's one thing we've obviously have to take into account - no, only the scientific issues but also any kind of cultural or health issues.

One running off after second athlete (8)

"It's a lot different taking a blood sample with a needle than taking a urine sample - even though that may be more embarrassing it's not necessarily affecting their health in the same way."

Vance said her role would be to provide the infrastructure to support the IOC's doping committee, which was expected to take about 2000 urine tests during the 2000 Olympics. Sydney has an IOC-accredited laboratory, unlike Atlanta which needed to upgrade its facilities.

There were troubles with

technology in Atlanta, where the High Resolution Mass Spectrometer made a controversial

Olympic debut. The sample which turned up positive on the machines for anabolic steroids in Atlanta had to be discarded, and the head of the International Amateur Athletic Federation doping commission, Arne Ljungqvist, said last month that the method was not 100 per cent reliable.

Vance admitted that the war

against performance-enhancing drugs was a difficult one to fight. "It's unfortunate to come that athletes try to find ways to cheat the system and as we catch up with incorporating things like out of competition

programmes to compete with anabolic steroid use we are now looking at substances which are impossible to find in the urine with the current technology.

"Now there may well be new technology that finds ways to detect these substances in urine or they may find that the new technology requires blood samples. We will have a blood testing contingency plan so we will be right on top of that issue."

Vance said the Sydney laboratory had one High Resolution Mass Spectrometer and would purchase "a couple more" for the Olympics. She said the key was to be ready to use whatever technology existed at the time of the Games and to keep track of advances in testing for drugs more contemporary than anabolic steroids, such as human

growth hormone (bGH), erythropoietin (EPO) and testosterone.

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Vance said the Sydney laboratory had one High Resolution Mass Spectrometer and would purchase "a couple more" for the Olympics. She said the key was to be ready to use whatever technology existed at the time of the Games and to keep track of advances in testing for drugs more contemporary than anabolic steroids, such as human

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